

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 325 740

CG 022 893

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TITLE Sexuality, Family, and Marriage.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 66p.; Chapters 5-9 of "Problem Solving Strategies and Interventions for Men in Conflict," (see CG 022 891).
PUB TYPE Collected Works - General (020)
EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Conflict; *Divorce; *Family Life; Fathers; *Males; *Marriage; *Sexuality

ABSTRACT

This document consists of part two of a book of readings that examine issues affecting men in the late 20th century. It was written for counselors at all educational levels, social workers, community therapists, private practitioners, clinicians, teachers, hospital workers, and Employee Assistance Program workers. Five chapters are included in this second section, which is on sexuality, family, and marriage. "Dimensions of Pleasure: Sexuality, Men and Counseling" (Philip Colgan) departs from traditional conceptualizations of male sexuality to look at meaning, mission, power, structure, and resources in men's sexuality. "Men and Marriage" (Vincent Ciaramella) takes a family systems approach to examine the complementary relationships and the triangles that couples develop. It makes specific suggestions for men who are contemplating marriage. "Coping With the New Father Role" (Ronald Levant) addresses the significant cultural change that fathers currently are experiencing and outlines a fatherhood course. "Divorce: Are Men at Risk?" (Patrick McKenry and Sharon Price) discusses divorce as a process, the adjustments associated with divorce, relationships with former spouses, life as a divorced single man, social supports, living single, dating, sources of stress, and parenting difficulties. Also covered are interventions, divorce therapy, group approaches, divorce mediation, and services for fathers and their children. "Gay and Bisexual Men: Developing a Healthy Identity" (Stephen Parker and Ted Thompson) addresses the elements of healthy identity formation specifically applied to homosexual and bisexual men. (NB)

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SEXUALITY, FAMILY, AND MARRIAGE

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Healthy integration of sexuality within psychological health is elusive for many male clients. This chapter addresses the meaning, context, and emotional significance of sexuality.

Chapter 5

DIMENSIONS OF PLEASURE: SEXUALITY, MEN, AND COUNSELING

Philip Colgan

The importance of this chapter lies within the reader. Although much has been written about male sexuality, not enough has been digested and absorbed by most to produce anything but confusion. The male client presenting concerns about sexuality is beset both by a bewildering array of objective informational sources and by his self-perceptions, his relationships, and his world.

Extensive discussions of sexual counseling have focused on biomedical aspects (e.g., *Journal of Sexuality and Disability*) and psychological aspects (e.g., *Journal of Sex Education and Therapy*). Thus, although much excellent material concerning such diverse topics as sex roles, gender identity, sexual behavior, sexual performance, and sexual dysfunction is available, clinical experience still suggests that satisfactory integration of sexuality within psychological health remains elusive for many male clients.

What seems to be lacking is a coherent discussion of the meaning, context, and emotional significance of sexuality. Consequently, this chapter approaches this problem with two important ideas. The first is the concept that sexuality embraces all of the issues described above and yet implies more. A working hypothesis of this chapter is that sexuality is best described as a phenomenological experience whereby one makes sense of his desires for human relationships in the context of his life—past, present, and future. The chapter begins with a discussion of these issues.

The second important idea lies in a conceptual map for both client and clinician to use in approaching, understanding, and resolving concerns about male sexuality. The map can be used both in diagnosing and treating sexual issues in a contextual approach. The chapter concludes with some suggestions regarding clinical practice in working with sexuality and men.

Sexuality in Context

Because the beast with two backs (*Othello*, I, i, 116) has no voice, all discussions of sexuality merely approximate internal experience. Within these approximations, however, some basic principles seem to describe the experience of healthy, mature, integrated sexuality.

1. Integrated sexuality—involving the ability to know and love one-self and the ability to give and receive love from others—is a cornerstone of self-esteem.
2. Although the ways of expressing sexuality may vary from person to person, or within the person at any given time in life, the meaning of sexuality lies in the phenomenological sphere of expanding one's self-understanding beyond that customarily available through thought, emotion, or action alone.
3. Consequently, sexuality is transcendent. Like all mature, developed notions of man, sexual expression allows one to become larger than oneself, to be more than one usually is. What is transcended, then, is the aloneness of the self. Sexuality allows man to move momentarily from physical, emotional, and cognitive isolation.
4. Sexual behavior—desire, arousal, release—is but the observable structure, form, or process of transcendence. Tumescence is a metaphor.
5. As a corollary, sex can be viewed as an emotion (Everaerd, 1988). It has three components: (a) neurophysiological-biochemical; (b) behavioral-expressive; and (c) feeling-experiential (Izard & Blumberg, 1985).
6. Consequently, psychological sexual development is based largely on experience. Life experiences related to sexuality—feelings, thoughts, behavior—become the clinical "baggage," both good and bad, that influences further psychosexual development via therapy.

Sexuality, then, is both noun and verb. Sexuality is a bridge. And sexuality bridges. What is bridged is a gap between self and other. As bridges come in many forms, so too does sexuality. Sexuality may be expressed as a silent, yet knowing glance across a crowded room. Sexuality is expressed in a wedding ritual of two people jointly lighting a third candle from two still-burning tallow. Sexuality is expressed in tender moments of affection following genital sexual play. In all cases, a combination of thought, emotion, and action enables the individual to briefly become connected with something larger than self, even while participating in its creation.

The Map

Given the above, it would seem that a useful map for understanding the multiple roles of sexuality in a man's life may come from sexology. Only recently, however, has the field of sexology begun conceptually to address the experience of sexuality as more than the sum of physical, emotional, and cognitive factors (e.g., see Derogatis, Lopez, & Zinzetta, 1988). Help comes from the progenitor of psychology—philosophy.

The map develops a paradigm for understanding sexuality in terms of Aristotelian physics. This paradigm, in turn, suggests strategies for intervention.

In his *Physics* (Book 2, Chapter 3, 194B–195A), Aristotle explained four components that together cause an entity to be what it essentially is. These essential causes are very briefly summarized as:

Material—the raw materials or natural resources; the fundamental building blocks.

E.g., A house is made of bricks and wood.

Formal—the structure, or form of the combined material components.

E.g., Bricks and wood are assembled into a form.

Active—that which infuses the project with energy to effect its completion as an entity; that which effects, or influences, things to be as they currently are.

E.g., A builder uses his energy to create the structure.

Final—the purpose, function, or mission of the entity.

E.g., A house provides shelter.

Using Aristotle's categories, we can use 20th-century psychological terms to interpret sexuality as having four components:

Material: the basic building blocks; in human sexuality, a man's natural resources; his mind, heart, and body.

Formal: the structural features; in human sexuality, the interaction of a man's mind, body, and heart observable in his sexual behavior and interpersonal communication.

Active: the energy or power that influences the current state of affairs; in clinical terms, the affective, cognitive, and behavioral energies with which the man constructs his sexuality.

Final: the purpose for his activation of sexuality; the mission of his sexual desire and sexual expression. As described above in Platonic terms, his reach for transcendence, (see Plato, *Symposium*, 209C–211C).

If we think of the components described above as a repetitive cycle, it becomes apparent that the final cause is both end point and starting point. The French description of orgasm, "Chaque petit mort est une

naissance" [Every little death is a birth], says it well. Sexuality is both process and product.

Working Backward

This section will elaborate on the components of sexuality, or the map, described above. This is preparatory to describing their use for clinical intervention with men presenting sexuality concerns.

Fundamental to effective intervention, in this view, is the heuristic of "working backwards." The concept of working backwards comes from the field of intelligence research, especially information-processing approaches. Compared with means-end analysis (the customary approach to sex therapy), working backwards offers a more efficient and therefore useful heuristic for problem solving.

Working backwards is simply described: "One begins with the goal and seeks an operation from some intermediate state that would lead directly to the goal" (Kail & Pellegrino, 1985, p. 68). In other words, start with where you want to arrive. Work backwards through the map step by step to the beginning.

Working backwards is a way of conceptualizing the components of problem solving. It becomes a procedure for using the map. To encourage the focus on working backwards, Aristotle's hierarchy of components will be discussed in reverse order, starting with Final Cause, or Mission.

Final Cause or Mission

Most descriptions of healthy, mature, and integrated sexuality view sexuality as an important foundation for the twin goals of self-esteem in the way of self-respect, and self-esteem as the way to give and receive love. The purpose for developing healthy sexuality, then, is not merely as a goal in itself, but more importantly to remove sexuality from the sphere of "problems" and place it in perspective as a cornerstone of self-esteem.

From semiotic theory, or the science of language and its symbols, linguists teach that certain statements can serve two functions simultaneously (see Greimas, 1987). Similarly, from psychoanalytic theory, psychologists commonly hold the belief that the same may be said for any given behavior: It can serve two functions simultaneously. I will refer to one function as explicit and the other as implicit. One is apparent; the other is apprehended. Using this understanding, one can subdivide a statement of Mission to describe two purposes—one explicit, one implicit.

In terms of sexuality, it may be said that the explicit mission of healthy sexuality is pleasure—physical, emotional, mental. Within this is perhaps the implicit reason for healthy sexuality: Employing the ability to transcend the isolation of the self, physically, mentally, and emotionally. Via transcendence, one achieves an awareness of self in relation to others, an awareness that surpasses ordinary understanding. The desire for transcendence, like all great and mature emotions, is developed both in self-love and in love for others. Transcendence may be stated as the implicit mission of healthy, mature, integrated sexuality.

Active Cause or Energy

In this paradigm, action is viewed as a description of energy or power. In matters of sexuality, power becomes the psychic and physical energy that gravitates toward satisfying human connections. Power in this regard does not refer to control over others. Rather, it is an energizing term.

Formal Cause or Structure

In sexuality, the form or structure is the process of cognitive, physical, and emotional arousal that leads to transcendence. Traditional forms of sex therapy attend to the structure of sexual behavior. Historically, the basis for sexology lies in science. Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin (1948) reported their observations regarding sexual behavior. Masters and Johnson (1970) continued and expanded this work in what we have come to know as sex therapy. Included in this is attention to those parts of the process of arousal and release that commonly afflict people—the sexual dysfunctions.

Material Cause or Resources

In sexuality, a man's resources are his mind, his body, and his heart. As noted above, the resources of mind and body are being attended to, and continue to receive attention crucial to our understanding of the effects of drugs—illicit, medicinal, and recreational—and of various disabilities, some one or more of which will probably affect us all eventually. Matters of the heart, however, are often ignored in the definitions and treatment of sexual concerns. The only apparent reason for this is simply a matter of state of the art: Only now is sexuality being approached in terms of emotion research (Everaerd, 1988).

In discussions of sexuality, especially as applied to clinical practice, these resources within the individual describe both his physical self and his phenomenological understanding of himself, with the accompanying

history of sexual behavior, attitudes, and knowledge. Some of these accretions are impediments to healthy sexuality. These are later referred to as limitations. This is the "baggage," both good and bad.

The next section will describe problems encountered in each of these categories. The goal is to help the clinician evaluate problems within the dynamic hierarchy of components. In successful sexuality counseling, satisfaction generally refers to developing mature, healthy, integrated sexuality, enabling the man to be more at home with himself (self-esteem), and to be more at home with others (intimacy) (Colgan, 1987).

Sexuality Problems

This section focuses on developing the concepts of the map. The purpose is to further elucidate clinical situations in which accurate problem identification can lead to greater clinical success.

Problems of mission are among the most difficult for clients to identify. This is understandable because the concept of mission attached to sexuality has not received sufficient attention in either the popular or the professional press. Even when a man knows that "something is missing" or that "sex seems empty," still he may not have the words that would help him articulate the nature of the problems.

The professional can help in such cases by leading the man to develop his own language about the intrinsic role of sexuality in his life. Sexuality, in this context, is an embodiment of conscious or unconscious statements about the self. The therapeutic goal in clarifying problems of meaning is to help the client uncover the explicit or implicit self-definitions embodied in his understanding of himself and his sexuality.

Some clinical examples of such self-definitions include: "I am a lovable person," "I am a generous person," "I am a loving person." Conversely, a man may find also what Jung terms the "dark side" (Jung, 1959). Statements that reflect the dark side of sexuality might include: "I am a greedy person," "I am an animal," "I am a controlling person."

Clarification of these issues is not directed toward immediate amelioration of the concerns a man feels. Nonetheless, without clarification, therapy is apt to be misdirected.

As noted above, the explicit meaning may be that the purpose of healthy sexuality is pleasure, both physical and emotional. The physical has been adequately explored in many publications (e.g., Masters & Johnson, 1970). Emotional pleasure has been vaguely referred to in the current jargon of "intimacy" (Colgan, 1988). But, just as many professionals are confused about what constitutes intimacy, so too clients are often confused about the meaning of emotional pleasure.

Once again, the difficulty arises from inadequate language to describe sexuality as a physically and emotionally transcendent experience. Consequently, expect confusion. What is transcended? How can that which is rooted in the physical become something beyond the physical? Is this what people mean when they say "spiritual"? Is this mixing up sex and love?

To clarify, consider the concept of ecstasy. Ecstasy is defined as a state of exalted delight in which normal understanding is felt to be surpassed. The origin of the word is Greek, *ekstasis*, from *existanai*—to displace, drive out of one's senses. Ecstasy, then, is akin to having a nonphysical experience even while sensually awake and alert.

Ejaculation is commonly thought of as the physical moment of ecstasy for men (Kaplan, 1974). But sex researchers have added to our understanding of the subjective experience of orgasm. Bohlen (1981) documented the distinction between objective, measurable physical changes that accompany ejaculation and the subjective, personal, nonobservable qualitative experience of orgasm. In test-retest clinical trials, men's perceptions of the duration, intensity, and pleasure associated with orgasm varied whereas objective physical changes associated with ejaculation did not.

These observations give credence of our understanding that ecstasy—or transcendence—is not only a physical but also an emotional experience. Orgasm is perhaps one of the easiest (outside of drugs), but by no means only, way of reaching a state of transcendence. The physical sensation of release is associated with pleasure on a level beyond our normal understanding.

The sensation of becoming larger than oneself—or transcending the self—is not limited to orgasm. If transcending oneself can be viewed as joining with something larger than oneself, then transcendence is available to us in other ways. For example, joining with another in the creation of mutual pleasure can be subjectively defined as a transcendent experience.

Disorders of transcendence are most easily seen when men include emotional power and control over others as part of their sexuality. The rapist, the child molester, the man who uses emotional manipulation to gain sexual favors, can all be viewed as using domination as an acceptable route to becoming something larger than themselves. In less extreme examples, men who do not wish to join with another to achieve an awareness of self beyond the usual—that is, for example, men who do not love their parents—will have problems of mission connected with sexuality as well.

Problems of energy or power surface through the rubric of sexual desire. Note that power is defined as an energy term, not a reference to domination. In this sense, sexual power encompasses two complementary

impulses in integrated sexuality: the urge to take and the urge to give. The urge to take is defined as lust. "Lust" includes the desire to take the pleasures life offers, pleasures of the flesh exhibited in a robust relish of sensual pleasures. These include stimulation of all physical senses—the succulence of a strawberry, the beauty of a sunset, the roar of the ocean, the aroma of hot pastrami, the silky fur of the dog. Lust then, is the animal urge.

Love is the human urge. Love in all its forms—brotherly, romantic, erotic, love of hearth, homeland, friendship, higher power—is understood as both a state of being and a state of becoming. In loving relationships, people give, people share, people accommodate, and people tolerate.

Love and lust combined result in a willingness to partake of and share the physical and emotional pleasures of life. As such, the power of an individual's sexuality within close relationships may be stated as "I will demand of your time, your interest, and your body only what you freely offer" (Brantner, 1987).

A power failure—lack of potency in positive responses to the gifts of aliveness—may indicate psychopathology (e.g., Meyer, Schmidt, Lucas, & Smith, 1975); emotional disorders such as depression (LoPiccolo, 1980) or anhedonia (Schoyer, Friedman, Weiler, Heiman, & LoPiccolo, 1980); learning deficits (Wolpe, 1969); or organic factors (Stuntz, 1985).

Problems of form or structure emerge when the process for attaining meaningful human contact is either dysfunctional or misguided. This is the area for traditional sex therapy, which focuses on sexual dysfunction. Sex-focused therapy has evolved from achieving goals of education and increased awareness (Masters & Johnson, 1970), to more refined combinations of psychodynamic and behavioral approaches (Kaplan, 1974), to more eclectic individual and relationship combinations (Sollod, 1988).

Sex therapy is a subspecialty of sexuality counseling. Generally, resolution of problems of structure is best left to those with specialized training in sex therapy. In some cases, however, providing accurate sexual information can resolve sexual concerns (Annon, 1977). In any case, the general practitioner can utilize general principles of problem identification and referral for sexual dysfunctions.

Problems of resources include those that interrupt the man's natural ability to coordinate his body, mind, and heart to achieve meaningful human connections. As noted above, matters of his body are primarily the province of his physician. The clinician, however, needs to be fully apprised of the limits to physical resources the client experiences. Attention, however, to general matters of physical maintenance—eating and exercise patterns, for example—are optimally approached in the therapeutic relationship. Resources for the mind abound in the present culture. Bibliotherapy, communication classes, seminars, and men's re-

treats are all helpful ways to stimulate self-awareness, sexuality attitude reassessment, intellectual curiosity, and communication skills development.

Matters of the heart are more difficult for male clients to approach. In mainstream United States culture, men are encouraged to inhibit affective verbal expression (see Moore & Haverkamp, 1989, for a discussion of these issues). Instead, a premium is placed on expression of emotion through action, often aggressive action (Miller, 1983). As a result, even when directly questioned about feeling fear or anxiety, boys are more likely than girls to lie and keep their feelings secret (Lekaczynk & Hill, 1969). It is not surprising that, as adults, men self-disclose less than women (Cosby, 1973). And it is not difficult to understand that the male client may well have trouble recognizing and utilizing the emotional resources at hand in life as well as in therapy.

Limitations to resources may surface in an initial assessment of early learning experiences and later developmental experiences concerning sexuality in all forms. Additionally, such problems of resources (again, the "baggage" a man carries) may surface during the course of therapy. This is especially true, in my experience, of traumatic, shameful, or abusive events of the past (see Brown, 1988, for a discussion of these issues).

Treatment: Using the Map

The sections above describe a map for both accurate assessment and understanding of sexuality problems. Using the map is the focus of this section. In therapy, the map is used as an instrument for problem clarification both at the beginning of therapy and at any time the focus of therapy seems lost. Failure to conduct a thorough diagnosis and loss of direction in sexually focused therapy have been cited as major determinants of therapeutic failure (Chapman, 1982).

Conceptually, the map is both hierarchical and circular. Both uses for clinical work will be illustrated below. Primary to both utilizations, however, is a clear understanding that without clarity in the mission statement, therapeutic interventions at other junctures are apt to fail.

Both client and therapist work best together for problem resolution when the statement of purpose is jointly understood and approved. Arriving at a mutual understanding of the goal of therapy alleviates many future disappointments. Again, stating the obvious may seem pedantic. Yet explicit statements of the therapeutic goals, and then intrinsic meaning to the individual client, begins or refines the process of skill development in communication. Masters and Johnson (1970) noted that communication problems may be responsible for 50% of the problem in sexual dysfunction.

Using the map hierarchically means starting at the top and working backwards, clarifying concepts as one moves. For example, if the purpose of sexuality is to be a well-adjusted person, the purpose of therapy may be to develop specific skills that, when incorporated, will lead to more satisfying sexual adjustment. Understanding and directing the client's energy expenditure can help the therapist focus on relevant material and not waste time on tangential quests.

Once the purpose is clarified, the next components—structure and resources—can fall easily into line. Structure becomes the best method for achieving the goal; the resources of the client in the way of motivation, time, money, willingness, and so forth can be aligned with structural demands. Limitations to resources for satisfying the mission can be addressed.

Therapeutic use of the map is, again, circular and hierarchical. Whenever the focus of therapy seems vague to either therapist or client, reference to the map can help to clarify the therapeutic goal. Circular use means going right to the top, restating the mission can clarify direction of energy expenditure. Current topics or homework in the therapy sessions, then, can be redesigned to be more specifically goal-directed.

Hierarchical use of the map is indicated in the direction taken for problem resolution. Simply put, work backwards. If a man believes he has a problem within resources, his impulse will probably be to address limitations of resources. Problem resolution, however, more likely lies at the level above resources, that of structure. Changing the structure may mean reallocation of resources, thereby addressing the resource problem.

Clinical examples will clarify these uses of the map. [Note: all clinical examples have been developed by the author for teaching purposes, and as such, do not reflect individuals.]

Clinical Examples

Joe is a 48-year-old stockbroker who develops a close relationship with a female colleague. Although it's not a sexual relationship, Joe feels increasingly drawn to her, and he reports experiencing a "meeting of the minds" unlike that which he experiences with his wife. In his confusion about his feelings, Joe has begun to have difficulty maintaining an erection with his wife. He feels bewildered, angry, and guilty. He has begun to believe that, although he loves his wife, he must leave her to pursue his attachment to the coworker. He interprets his impotence as a sign of lagging interest in his wife. He initiates therapy to resolve his feelings. Should he leave his wife and start a relationship with his co-

worker? Or should he be content with his lot and say goodbye to what feels to him like his best chance for happiness?

Conceptual analysis: Personal mission: Have a happy life. *Purpose of therapy:* Explicit—resolve feelings; Implicit—make value choices about what constitutes happiness. *Energy:* anxiety about his feelings of confusion and guilt; desire to do the "right thing." *Form of intervention:* Self-discovery via one-to-one therapy, initially; probably incorporating marital counseling in the future, all supplemented by bibliotherapy. *Resources:* the therapist; Joe himself; outside influence in the way of reading, seminars, conversation with others; perhaps his wife; perhaps his coworker. *Limitations to resources:* an irrational need for perfection in his own progress; awareness of his own mortality; 48 years of learning; current responsibilities to job and family.

Primary therapeutic intervention: Understand the nature of the problem. A problem defined (as above) as one of values clarification involves a question of purpose: How should Joe conduct his life? The solution requires Joe and his therapist to examine the question as one of meaning. What does it mean to him to have found this "meeting of the minds" with his coworker? Why is this happening at this stage of his life? What will it mean to him to leave his wife? Answering these questions will (in this example) clarify that Joe has discovered a new lease on life via his experience of having an intimate (notice, nonsexual) relationship with a coworker.

He may begin to see his marriage as the source of his dissatisfaction with life. If this is the case, then leaving the marriage for another relationship seems to be attempting to solve a meaning problem by attending a structural issue. This can only bode failure, as the energy expended in problem solving will have been misguided.

Secondary therapeutic intervention: If structure (marriage) is dissatisfying, move to next level up (energy) for problem solution. Is Joe willing to focus his energy on making his marriage more satisfying? If yes, then the therapeutic goal has shifted to focusing on marriage involvement. If no, then the therapeutic goal focuses on marriage dissolution. Thus, therapy goals shift toward the application of energy to address the newly stated mission.

Two other brief clinical examples of intervention at the level of problem identification will solidify the reader's understanding. (Note: these are simplified for teaching purposes.)

1. *A case involving therapeutic intervention at the level above problem identification:* Psychogenic erectile dysfunction seems to be related to anxiety about sexual performance (a structural problem). *Intervention:* Redirect client's energy to focus on pleasure (an energy investment), not on sexual performance, that is, tumescence (a resources issue). *Note:* this would require both client and therapist to share an understanding that

pleasure is the mission for the client's healthy sexual adjustment (a meaning statement).

2. *A case involving redirection of therapy by reexamining the mission statement:* Attempts to help a homosexual client develop a positive social network have resulted in frustration. Reevaluation of the mission statement reveals that the client actually wants a primary pair-bond, not a social network. He silently viewed the social network as a structure for achieving his goal, rather than as a mission statement in itself. Therapy is redirected toward the real goal.

Use of the map in sexuality counseling is, of course, effective only within general guidelines of sound therapeutic practice. These are extensively discussed elsewhere, and need not be reviewed here. Guidelines specific to sex therapy are available in other sources as well. In addition to these, however, I would suggest the following:

1. A familiarity with the transference and countertransference issues of interpersonal boundaries is a necessary foundation for a satisfying and effective clinical practice with sexuality issues (Colgan, 1988).

2. Counseling people on issues of sexuality can proceed only to the therapist's level of self-understanding (Maddock, 1975). This does not require the therapist to "have it all together." Rather, this is to indicate that therapists who are aware of their own strengths and limitations are more effective.

3. As a corollary, a phenomenological understanding of sexuality requires the therapist to respect the individual's idiosyncratic understanding of himself and his relationships (Colgan, 1988).

For further resources, the clinician is encouraged to receive specialized training in sex therapy. Seminars ranging from general principles to specialized interventions are widely available. Contact either the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists [435 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 1717, Chicago, Illinois 60611] or your professional organization for specific information concerning lectures, workshops, supervisory opportunities, and training institutes.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed clinical concepts of sexuality counseling with men. Discussion has specifically been directed toward understanding sexuality in the phenomenological realm of the individual. As such, male clients addressing issues of sexuality will benefit by the clinician's close attention to the meaning, context, and emotional significance of sexual expression. Intervention strategies based on a conceptual map of the experience of sexuality have been suggested. Finally, although spe-

cific suggestions are beyond the scope of this chapter, the clinician is encouraged to apply the principles of sexuality therapy, as discussed, in the context of the helping relationship.

Acknowledgment

The author gratefully acknowledges the contributions of G. Leonard Weirs (and Richard Kott) to this chapter.

Relationships are, by definition, reciprocal so that context and interaction become the key elements for any understanding.

Chapter 6

MEN AND MARRIAGE

Vincent Ciaramella

Making a relationship work is the most difficult of psychological tasks. It requires the use of all one's personal skills. It is complex because all intimate relationships, especially marriage in Western culture, require a transgenerational fluency: the ability to understand and articulate the "legacy" of our parents and grandparents. We never enter a relationship except as "emissaries" from our family of origin. Carl Whitaker, one of the four or five original thinkers in family therapy, once gave a talk in which he said, "I don't believe there is any such thing as an individual. We are all merely incomplete parts of a family."

This "diminished position" ascribed to the individual is simply another passageway for understanding the reality of human behavior. This family systems approach presents a construct that maximizes the possibility for change. It is optimistic because it relies heavily on our human ability to influence the transactions among ourselves. It places each of us on the path of responsibility for the state of the relationship we find ourselves in, and at the same time empowers us in our quest for intimacy through a balance of fairness and trust.

The Balance of Fairness: The Give-and-Take of Relationships

It is difficult to speak of men in relationships entirely from a gender perspective. Relationships are, by definition, reciprocal so that context and interaction become the key elements for any understanding. The writing of Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy, a leading family therapist, is extremely helpful in formulating an understanding of a reasonable model of intimate relationships.

Boszormenyi-Nagy speaks of the relationships of peers, mates, lovers, or friends in which there is an expectation of an equitable "give-and-take." He goes on to say that a relationship stays viable only as long as people manage to achieve a balance of relatively reciprocal contri-

butions between them. The commitment of the relationship manifests itself through each partner's doing his or her fair share of the work of the relationship. This work includes not only the daily chores of shopping, cleaning, child care, and so on, but also the emotional work necessary to maintain a bonding or closeness. If this is not the case, the relationship becomes one-sided and exploitative and cannot be sustained.

The key elements in Boszormenyi-Nagy's give-and-take are the attention to fairness and equity in a relationship. This ethical dimension, not often considered in current psychological practice, seems inherent to our everyday intuitive assessment of how individuals should relate. It is probable that without the elements of trust, fairness, or justice in a relationship, a partner may perceive a negative entitlement, that is, a kind of permission to behave in an exploitative manner toward a partner: "I have every right to do what I'm doing given the way I have been treated." It is also possible that transgenerational issues, cutoffs from parents for example, may have serious consequences for the marital couple because concerns about loyalty affect the balance of fairness.

When this cycle of unfairness and negative entitlement exists in a relationship, a kind of cancer invades the balance between the partners. Naturally, the converse is true. If there is an equitable balance of fairness in the relationship, then a merited entitlement or expectation of caring from the partner is earned, thereby expanding the mutuality of the relationship.

Men experience and may even actively practice negative entitlement in a number of ways. Three easily discernible forms are: emotional disconnectedness, overinvolvement in a career, and a cultural/familial imperative.

As part of his training to be a man, a boy quickly learns that rational, objective, logical thought is much preferred to emotional acknowledgement. A man in a group was asked to interview his father about emotions and family emotional expressiveness. When he approached his father with this task, his father said, "Your mother handles that sort of thing."

A second area of negative entitlement is overinvolvement in one's career. A man perceives that a successful career will bring recognition from his family and community. A middle-aged executive recently mused that his children faulted him for not being available to them when he believed he had "given all they ever wanted."

Third, men are occasionally burdened by a cultural imperative that places him in a position where the expectation is that his partner will "do for him." It is an expectation that comes more from a kind of family imprinting rather than a conscious arrogance.

For Boszormenyi-Nagy, relationships finally succeed on the basis of their long-term resources rather than on short-term behavior patterns. Clearly, it is impossible for any of us to avoid some element of exploi-

tation of our partner. What is devastating to a relationship is "consistent unilateral usage" over a period of time.

"Marriages founder or succeed on the question of whether or not people can develop the capacity to be responsible for the consequences of fairness and trust" (Beszornenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986, p. 336). In any given relationship individual men will need to reevaluate their "entitlements." "Have I earned this entitlement?" "Has it been earned in a context of fairness?" "Am I contributing to an equitable balance in the 'give-and-take' of this relationship?"

We have all seen children debating in the schoolyard whether a particular arrangement or exchange between them is fair or not. "It's not fair for you to bat two times in a row." Perhaps instinctively children grasp this primary concept of the balance of fairness as the key element in a functioning relationship. As adults, we seem often to lose sight of this essential truth. We have another opportunity to rediscover it in the intimacy of an adult relationship.

Mate Selection

It is not uncommon to hear a man say, "She's different now than when we were first married. I had no idea she was so attached to her mother or that she was so angry a person." These kinds of statements imply that the spouse practiced a kind of deception in order to hide certain personality characteristics or traits. Perhaps they were hidden to achieve a goal such as entrapment in the relationship.

My observation is that each of us "deserves" the spouse we have chosen. As I review the many couples I have worked with over the past 15 years, it becomes evident that, almost invariably, a kind of fit demonstrates itself. Although this fit may not and usually is not particularly evident, especially to couples who are experiencing serious problems, it is always present.

I began with the premise that both men and women select mates in a persistently directed and informed manner. By persistently directed and informed I mean that mate selection comes out of the jagged edge of our personality. The shape that our personality takes has been informed and continues to be influenced by the ebb and flow of our family of origin. Our efforts, then, driven by our own existential incompleteness, are to make a fit with that jagged edge. Imagine here a piece from a puzzle. The search is for another piece that will fit into the contours. This process of seeking a fit is instinctual and unconscious. In practical terms, we seek a mate who complements our own stage of psychological complexity. We seek a person who "fits" our inner structure. In effect,

couples too far apart don't marry. This is not to say that people of vastly different backgrounds don't marry one another. What I am saying, however, is that the couples fit together in some way, and on some level are fulfilling personal, and, perhaps, familial goals.

According to Prosky (1979), "Some basic complementary pairings are:

1. the good one and the bad one, the warrior and the peacekeeper, the martyr and the meanie;
2. the pragmatist and the dreamer, in which one person performs at the level of basic necessity and the other adds the color;
3. the pursuer and the distancer, in which one person constantly feels neglected and demands more attention and the other asserts his right to privacy and space around him;
4. the overt controller and the covert controller, in which one person is seen as the authority and lays down the explicit laws and sanctions and the other, seen as the weaker, wields power through covert manipulations and punishments.

the fact that intimate relationships are reciprocal means that no matter how much it looks like it, there is never a villain and never a hero. Each is in fact, a bit of both" (p. 25). The terms *reciprocal* and *complementary* are fundamentally interchangeable for our purposes. They mean "a reciprocal giving and taking of instruction, the reciprocal asking and answering of questions, the reciprocal asserting of an agreeing to statements, all of these reciprocal relationships being characterized by inequality stemming from the participants occupying a one up and a one down position" (Bodin, 1981, pp. 277-278).

Clearly complementarity does not imply that one partner is always one up and the other one down. It is likely that these roles swing depending on the issue. Yet, the relative position vis-à-vis power in the description of complementarity misses the point. It is precisely the appearance of helplessness of the martyr that organizes the meanness of the meanie, and vice versa. Each "grows fat" on the relative positions each adopts.

An example of this can be seen in a marital case in which a long-suffering wife puts up for years with the drunken behavior of her husband. She picks him up out of the gutter, endures his insults, and makes excuses for his behavior. Each incident is followed religiously by the husband's sincere repentance for several days following the binge. See how they dance together! Each giving gifts to the other. The husband giving his wife the gift of martyrdom. The wife giving her husband the gift of unbridled indulgence. Power, or one up or one down, is not the point; *mutual empowerment* is closer to the reality.

So the superorganized man may choose a less-than-ordered woman, or the laid-back man chooses a more responsible woman. If a variety of conditions exists in a functioning relationship, each partner will teach the best of his or her personality to the other. In a problematic relationship, the differences eventually become even more exaggerated, leading to even greater distance between the couple. In other words, if there is trust and parity in the relationship, individuals will be open to learning about what they lack. In a recent conversation with a friend, he indicated that he had learned from his wife how to compliment people without feeling manipulative or fawning. This is a functional relationship. If the relationship had been problematic, he might have seen her suggestions as demanding and controlling.

In an intimate relationship, the issues of individuation and fusion emerge in this balancing of identities, or complementarity. Individuation is a process by which one achieves a sense of self-completion, particularly as it relates to one's family of origin. Fusion is an incomplete or non-existent emergence of one's self as a discrete individual. Individuals in relationships continually search for a dynamic balance between individuation and fusion. Individuation in the case described above is being loved for who one is, and fusion is becoming so like a part of the partner that one is lost.

McGoldrick presented a caution as she observed issues of complementarity becoming a block to individuation and a doorway to fusion. It is not contradictory to see the compulsion of complementary forces acting in our interpersonal actions, while at the same time valuing one's personal sense of existential separateness. "There is a vast difference between forming an intimate relationship with another separate person and using a couple relationship to try to complete one's self and improve one's self-esteem. The natural human desire to share one's experience often leads to this confusion between seeking closeness and seeking fusion in coupling" (Carter & McGoldrick, 1987, p. 213).

Bowen (1978) would say that the root of this problem of seeking completeness through fusion with another is related to incomplete differentiation from one's family of origin. A distinction is now being made between the general interactional force of complementarity which, again, in itself is neither productive or destructive, and Bowen's observation of the dynamics of fusion, which he observed as a destructive method of "completing" oneself. It is clear, however, that incomplete, unhappy adult relationships with parents almost always fold back onto the marital relationship of the adult child.

A young couple in treatment described how each partner operates a separate enterprise within the marriage. Each keeps separate accounts. Monies are never mixed. He tells her, "Don't pay a cleaning person, you pay me with your money and I will clean our home." Her family absent-

mindedly forgets to set a place for him at the table during a recent visit. His family talks about how she takes advantage of his good nature. Neither partner has been able to claim adulthood in their respective families, thus making impossible the creation of a new family. In fact, this couple can never "divorce" because they have never been "married."

Suggestions For Men (Couples) Contemplating Marriage

Given what we know about the impact of the family of origin on marriage, let us review some suggestions for men who are contemplating marriage.

1. Be aware that instituting a serious relationship directly after a serious loss increases the possibility of marital failure. Serious loss changes the fundamental shape of our puzzle piece and, given the interactive systemic forces operating in every family, one cannot predict the new shape the family may take. The loss, for example, may cast the individual into a different role, which may either enhance or detract from his ability to sustain a serious relationship.
2. Be aware that the more significant the differences between each spouse, such as religion, education, social class, ethnicity, age, and so on, the more risky the relationship.
3. Choosing a geographic comfort zone that incorporates a relationship with both families of origin increases the chances of success. This zone needs to be far enough away so that primary loyalty to one another can be built, yet close enough to find support and familiarity with one's psychological history.
4. Be aware that marriage is not a useful vehicle for distancing from family-of-origin problems. Sequence here is crucial. One must first establish a sense of self, however imperfect, before one can establish an intimate relationship. It is incredibly more difficult to use a marriage relationship as the vehicle for individuation.
5. The new relationship must have a sense of its own resources—financial, physical, and emotional. An overdependence on outside resources increases the possibility of triangulation (see next section).
6. A reasonable period of acquaintanceship should precede the marriage. As a general rule, a reasonable period of acquaintanceship facilitates the negotiations that must follow the fall-out from unresolved issues of complementarity.
7. The wedding should be seen as an event that includes not only the marrying couple but the extended family and friends as well.

8. Each spouse should make every attempt to take care of unfinished business before the wedding, such as cutoffs from siblings or parents (adapted from Carter & McGoldrick, 1989, p. 231).

Men and Triangles

What Are They—How Can You Avoid Them?

There are solutions to marital problems that lead to resolution and there are solutions that delay an immediate crisis, sometimes for a long time. Solutions that result from the formation of a triangle are pseudo-solutions in that they protect all the participants from a major pain or intense anxiety by moving their focus to a new terminus. The appearance of this new terminus is the basis of triangulation. Imagine a triangle with the husband on one angle, the wife on another, with the third angle containing the person or issue being triangulated. This triangle is the smallest relationship grouping. A partial description of an emotional system described by Murray Bowen is the following: "The triangle describes the dynamic equilibrium of a three person system" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 135).

As anxiety increases in a two-person system, the involvement of a third element prevents a crisis by dissipating it throughout the system. This construct then reduces the possibility of the two-person relationship crisis. The newly stabilized three-element unit can now proceed, having achieved what may become a long-term accommodation.

An example of triangulation might be the following. A man feels his partner is not responding to him sexually. From the woman's perspective, the man's self-absorption is sufficient enough reason for her to withdraw. As she withdraws, the man's anger grows, and the couple's anxiety level rises to a level that threatens the stability of the relationship. At this point, the couple moves toward a method of dealing with this stress: the incorporation in the circuitry of a readily available element. This element may be a somatic complaint, overinvestment in a job, an affair, or a child, to name a few examples. In our example, the couple chooses to triangulate a somatic complaint, the headaches of the woman. The headaches immobilize her and provide a cover and explanation for her lack of sexual interest. Similarly, they give the man permission to overinvest in his work, and provide an area in which he can comfort his sick wife and assuage his guilt for being absent so often from the family. An evaluation of the workings of this triangle reveals that each partner helped to create this solution and each benefited both immediately and also helped to stabilize the relationship. Yet, the underlying, basic relationship dilemma remains unsolved by the triangle.

Although the formation of a triangle often offers a kind of solution to a problem, there remains a vague awareness on the part of all the participants that something is not quite right. A kind of twilight discontentment exists in the midst of the triangle.

Detriangulation is risk taking. It means giving up a proven device for a less-than-secure outcome. One half of the couple must take a risk and move out of the triangle first by reevaluating and reworking his or her actions to determine how to earn merited entitlement within the relationship.

Second, the partner must move toward the other partner directly, not through the circuitry of the third element. For most men, this means reevaluating their investment in work or in an affair, for example.

The therapist's best chance to help comes out from an appreciation of how systems operate. Thinking systemically permits the helper to speak from a more neutral metaposition. "In essence, neutrality is reflected in the ability to define self without being emotionally invested in one's own viewpoint or in changing the viewpoints of others" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 150).

Every human relationship remains imperfect. It is not suggested that as one earns merited entitlements from a partner and rejects triangulation through straightforward communication, the couple will reach some sort of utopian joining. An intimate relationship exists as a living organism with each element having discrete functions yet being operationally joined. Functional couples are greater than the sum of their parts. The interactional life of a functioning couple produces a new dimension, a transactional spirit that is an intermingling of unconditional trust.

Men and Marriage Counseling

Most would agree that the overwhelming number of couples who seek marriage counseling present the female partner as the person more invested in seeking help. Somehow talking to a therapist about a problem in the marriage seems to come easier for women. They seem naturally less threatened by the process. What then often is presented to the therapist is a rather flexible, committed woman and a more detached, somewhat distant man. This constellation may induce the therapist into an unconscious alliance with the woman, cementing the outside position of the man.

Often the therapist will be induced into working with the more committed wife. The therapist, who may be either male or female, may decide to see the wife separately. If there is anything that will induce a

crisis even more quickly in an already stressed marriage, it is the involvement of one half of the marriage in a "therapeutic" process. This can serve only to unbalance the relationship further. Thus, the therapist may be seduced into becoming part of a system that has already decided how its members are to be arranged and how it will deal with the stress of the relationship.

The point is that whatever causal factors society or even individuals may ascribe to men's greater difficulty in accepting "talking" help, these male "characteristics" are used by all the participants in a marriage system. This is not a denial of male or female differences, either physiological, psychological, or societal in origin. Rather, it is simply a statement that whatever these characteristics are, they are adopted by the marital system, and all members are thus equally responsible for the actions that result.

For example, a couple comes into treatment with the man not at all sure this is going to work. He is less verbal, more distant, with the woman presenting the more reasonable and emotionally complete explanation of the marital difficulty. It would be natural for her story to be better received. Were this to occur, however, there would be a consequent escalation of marital difficulty or a premature ending of the treatment. One can safely state that the couple used this male/female difference as their way to have a "nontherapy," and, in the process, got the therapist to assist in the creation of this "nontherapy."

Special care must then be exercised by the helper not to go along with this marital dance. A direct effort must be made to engage the man. Compliment the man for allowing his wife to be seen as the more co-operative spouse: "What an unselfish position you are taking." At the same time, you're complimenting the wife for working so hard: "You work so that your husband doesn't have to risk too much of himself in this marital work." If the therapist takes this position or something akin to this, it becomes impossible to be seduced into this family game of keeping the man distant and protected.

Conclusion

It is a truism that only through relationships can one stimulate personal growth. In trying to think about men in relationships, our emphasis has been placed on the man—not in terms of gender differences, but rather, how the family system cooperates to incorporate all gender differences, both male and female.

Given the culture we operate in, marriage is clearly the most useful vehicle for stimulating intimate relationships. It provides both men and

women a structure to increase intimacy and personal growth. It is an imperfect institution peopled with imperfect marriage partners.

Marriage has existed in many historical forms. In Western culture an evolution of this institution in a technological society has resulted in a change in the very nature of the contract of marriage. Both women and men face new problems as the structure of marriage continues to evolve.

In the midst of this change exists the relationship of two people in context. Each has a history that contributes to a systemic balance. This chapter elevates the couple in relationship by saying, "What goes on between you is what you deserve. Change it if you choose to."

This chapter provides an outline for a course to facilitate fathers' commitment and interaction with their children.

Chapter 7

COPING WITH THE NEW FATHER ROLE

Ronald F. Levant

Is There a New Father Role?

A lot has changed with regard to families in one short generation. The modal family of the 1950s, with a breadwinner husband and a homemaker wife, has been all but replaced by a plethora of new family forms. Only 9.8% of the population are married couples with children under 18 in which the husband is the sole breadwinner (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1985). Single-parent households, stepfamilies, and families where both parents work are the more common family forms today. Some of the factors contributing to this change include: the development of the birth control pill in the late 1950s, which served to separate the pursuit of intimacy from the responsibilities of parenting; the explosion of divorce rates beginning in the 1960s, which more than doubled by 1979; the sharp increase in the employment of women in the 1970s, to the point where over half of all mothers of children under 6 are employed, and the reduction in the American standard of living to the point that membership in the middle class now requires two incomes.

All of this has served to generate considerable confusion regarding the roles of men in families. On the one hand there are some indications that the father's role has changed, and countless articles appear in the popular press touting the "new father," a parent who is personally involved in the day-to-day rearing of his children; on the other hand data suggest that the father's role has not changed all that much, and the airways are filled with television "talk" shows that decry the lack of male involvement in family life.

Changing Norms for the Father Role

Indications exist that there has been a significant change in the father's role. This phenomenon was illustrated in the popular 1979 film

Kramer vs. Kramer, in which Dustin Hoffman poignantly portrayed the struggles that some men were going through as they confronted their limitations in such areas as maintaining a home and caring for children. These men made some rather painful and difficult choices that limited their careers. This film seems to have tapped a heartfelt dimension, one that shows up in attitudinal studies that find that men's family roles are more significant to them psychologically than their paid work roles. These data include men's self-ratings of their psychological involvement in family and work (Erskine, 1973; Lem, Durham, Pratt, Schudson, Thomas, & Weiss, 1974; Pleck & Lang, 1978), and of the relative contributions of family and work experience to their sense of well-being (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Pleck & Lang).

This same deeply felt dimension is also being tapped by the advertising industry in the current trend of depicting men in nurturing roles in order to sell various products. A recent two-page magazine ad for Team Xerox shows a little girl looking out through a lace curtain. The caption reads:

Sara really didn't expect her daddy to show up for her birthday party. His work never seemed to let up and his office wasn't exactly built for speed. But lately, he's been doing something about his office. He brought in Team Xerox.

The products and people of Team Xerox not only helped him get his office up to snuff, but also gave him one very important side benefit. The birthday party his daughter never forgot.

Ads like these are becoming more common and are being used to sell products such as insurance, credit cards, diamonds, film, and even soap. The point is that Madison Avenue is spending a lot of money promoting products by appealing to a nurturing spirit in men, which it most certainly would not do if it did not have reason to believe that such a spirit exists and is fairly widespread.

Other evidence that supports the view that the father's role has changed comes from the workplace and includes anecdotal and empirical accounts of the ways in which men are making compromises in their careers for the sake of their families. There are several manifestations of this trend. The first is increased father involvement in seeking child-care services, whether in the form of direct dependent-care financial assistance, "cafeteria style" benefits packages that include some child-care assistance, on-site child-care, or child-care information services (Catalyst, 1988).

The second manifestation is alternative work schedules, such as flexi-time, flexi-place, compressed 4-day work weeks, permanent part-time work, and job sharing. Although these job designs are still primarily

used by women, the elderly, and the very young, men are increasingly utilizing them to balance work and family responsibilities. The third manifestation is resistance to relocation. Employees on management tracks are increasingly refusing to relocate, citing family needs as the reason (Catalyst, 1983). As a consequence, relocation policies are changing at many firms in order to respond to the family needs of their employees. The fourth manifestation is paternity leave, which is a new concept reflecting the importance that men place on being with their families during and shortly after the birth of their child. New evidence indicates that large numbers of fathers find some way to take time off from work, if not through formal paternity leave, then through sick child leave and the like (J. Pleck, personal communication, November 3, 1988). This phenomenon also shows up in the dramatic increase in the proportion of fathers attending the births of their children, which has risen from 27% in 1974 to 80% in 1984 (Lewis, 1986).

Traditional Norms of the Father Role Resisting Change

On the other hand, evidence exists that although the father's role has changed from what it used to be in the 1950s, it has not changed that much. In the middle and late 1960s, the time budget indicated that husbands' participation in family work was low (4.1 to 4.6 hours/day) compared to that of their wives (7.6 to 8.4 hours/day for housewives and 4.0 to 4.8 hours/day for employed wives) and that husbands tended to increase their participation only slightly (9.1 hour/day) in response to their wives' employment (Robinson, 1977; Walker & Woods, 1976). This had improved by a small amount by the mid 1970s due to husbands' doing more and wives' doing less. Using measures comparable to those used in the earlier studies, Pleck (1985) found that husbands put in 4.8 hours/day, housewives put in 6.8 hours/day, and employed wives put in 4.0 hours/day. This study was repeated in 1981, allowing an even more direct comparison of changes over time. In this later study, Juster and Stafford (1985) found a 20% to 30% increase in the amount of time husbands put into family work; however, husbands' participation in family work remained only about a third of that of their wives. Thus, men are doing more family work, but the lion's share of the responsibility still falls to women.

Reconciliation: The Culture Versus the Conduct of Fatherhood

We are in the midst of an era of social change in which certain aspects of men's roles are changing faster than others. LaRossa (1989)

pinpointed the issue with his distinction between the *culture* of fatherhood (the shared norms, beliefs, and values about fathering) and the *conduct* of fatherhood (what fathers actually do). We are living in an era in which we feel strongly that men can be involved, nurturing parents; but yet the men who are trying to enact this role find themselves falling short of the idealized model.

Various explanations have been put forward to account for this disparity between the culture and the conduct of fatherhood. Cowan and Bronstein (1988) identified the following factors: Mothers may be ambivalent about sharing the parenting role, and in subtle ways make it difficult for their husbands to be more involved; parenting programs and services have, in general, not been designed to accommodate fathers; and employers and legislators are not enthusiastic about men using work time for family concerns. Although I think all of these factors play a role, I would like to advance the hypothesis that *that the primary factor is the fact that men who are fathers today were simply not prepared for the role*. Their fathers—their primary role models—were cut from traditional cloth, and enacted the good provider/chief disciplinarian paternal role. Moreover, as boys, the current generation of fathers was socialized to be like their fathers. They did not play with dolls, nor mind their younger siblings, nor go to home economics classes, nor offer babysitting services to their neighbors.

More fundamentally, the current generation of adult men did not as boys learn psychological skills that are basic to being able to nurture and care for children. These skills include the ability to be empathically attuned to the feelings of others, and the ability to access and to become aware of their own feelings. While their sisters were taught to be sensitive to the feelings of others, boys were taught to be aggressive and competitive. If boys were ever taught anything about attentive listening, it was in the service of listening to one's opponent closely in order to identify the flaw in his position (Farrell, 1986). In regard to their own feelings, boys were told that "big boys don't cry," or, in sports, that they should learn to "play with pain," exhortations that served to train them to be out of touch with their own feelings, particularly those feelings on the vulnerable end of the spectrum.

Many fathers struggling with the new father role can receive significant aid from some form of remedial education, which helps them develop both the knowledge about parenting and the psychological skills that they need to enact the involved parent role. Later in this chapter, one such course (the Fatherhood Course) will be described. Before we get to that, it is necessary to take a closer look at the kinds of family contexts in which today's adult men are expected to enact the new father role: the working parent family, the post-divorce family, and the remarried family.

The New Father and the New American Families

In this section, we will consider the three family types most common today, with particular reference to the demands on the new father. Of necessity, the coverage will be brief, with the aim of highlighting the particular difficulties for today's father. Readers may wish to explore these topics in greater depth through some of the publications listed in the section on additional resources.

The Working Parent Family and the New Father Role

The working parent family, which includes both the dual career and the two paycheck family, is one of the most common family types today. Over 50% of couples now consist of two breadwinners. The growth of this family type parallels the rise in the employment of women, which increased from 26% of all women over 18 employed in 1960 to 30% in 1982.

The working parent family, while increasing role options and opportunities for life experiences for many men and women (particularly the dual career variant), brings with it a host of problems not encountered in the husband-as-breadwinner-wife-as-homemaker model. The major problem, for both men and women, is the lack of time. Indeed, the lack of time was the cover story in a recent issue of *Time* magazine entitled, "The Rat Race: How America Is Running Itself Ragged" (Michaels & Willworth, 1989). The lack of time results as two people try to manage their career or job and their family. The result is role overload and role strain.

The stresses on the working parent family are exacerbated by the lack of external supports and the existence of impediments. First and foremost, there is difficulty in finding child care, affordable, high-quality care, whether in the form of day care for preschoolers, after-school care for school-age children, or sick child care. Second, there is the lack of flexible workplace policies that might facilitate the balancing of multiple roles, policies such as flexible scheduling, parental leaves, flexible benefits, and family-sensitive relocation policies.

Another problem for working parents is role-cycling—that is, the process of transitioning between the demands of one role to the demands of the other. An example is the executive who comes home in the evening after a typical but very difficult workday, and whose wife is teaching a class that evening. Role-cycling requires that he shift gears from a fast-paced, perhaps aggressive, mode of functioning, to a softer, nurturing

style as he prepares his children's dinner and hears about their concerns of the day.

There is also the problem of conflict between one's external role and psychological factors such as self-concept, identity, values, and moral commitments associated with gender issues. For women, a prominent issue is guilt over not fulfilling the homemaker role, guilt that may in fact be reinforced by her own mother reminding her (as the mother protests her daughter's work role), "But I was always home for you." A parallel issue for men is conflict over not fulfilling the good provider role. This can take many forms, from feeling competitive with, or inadequate in relationship to, his wife because of her earning power, to resenting his children for "holding him back."

The key to a workable family life lies in the parents' ability to hear each other's concerns in a nondefensive manner, to articulate their own complaints without blaming the other, and to work together in a flexible and creative way to find solutions to their conflicts. Many men living in a working parent family are at some disadvantage in working out the arrangements for a reasonably harmonious family life because they lack the requisite communication and negotiation skills. For these men, participation in a course that provides training in the psychological skills of listening and negotiation could be helpful.

Gilbert and Rachlin (1987) advised couples, particularly dual career couples, attempting to work out a set of balances in their family to seek "equity" rather than "equality." Given the psychosocial distance most parents are trying to traverse in the mere space of a generation, attaining a completely "50/50" split of all the household, child care, and paid work responsibilities is unrealistic for many couples. However, it is often quite possible to achieve a set of arrangements that both parents feel is *fair*. Equity is a more modest and ultimately more practical goal than equality.

The Post-Divorce Family and the New Father Role

We are living in the era of the "Divorce Revolution." The divorce rate climbed from 2.1 divorces per thousand population in 1958 to 5.3 in 1979, increasing more than 250% during this period. Since 1974 there have been more than one million divorces every year in this country. Fully one third of the children born in the 1980s are expected to live in a single-parent home at some time before they are 18 years of age.

The modal post-divorce family is a female-headed household with a noncustodial father who is required to provide financial support and is entitled to reasonable visitation with his children. This family form accounts for 9% of the post-divorce families; the rest consist of a smaller portion of couples with joint physical custody, and a larger portion of

father-headed households. This section will focus on visitation fatherhood. For an in-depth study of custodial fathers, see Greif (1985).

The reality of visitation fatherhood is bleak. Visitation tends to be maintained for the first 2 years, and then falls off. Furstenberg, Nord, Peterson, and Zill (1983) found that fewer than half of a national sample of children of divorce had seen their fathers once in the preceding 12 months. Child support was maintained better than visitation, but it too dropped off over time. The children pay a heavy price for this (Kelly, 1988), but the fathers suffer as well. Ambrose, Harper, and Pemberton (1983) found that all but one of their sample of nonvisiting fathers had developed a mental health problem since the divorce.

Many, if not most, divorces are characterized by ongoing conflict between the former spouses. This conflict must be resolved or set aside in order to facilitate continuing contact between the children and their noncustodial father. Noncustodial fathers are at a particular disadvantage for dealing with post-divorce conflict because of the shift in the balance of power in favor of their wives. As mentioned above, men of this generation have not, in general, been prepared to be good listeners or flexible negotiators; in fact, as boys they were trained to resolve conflicts through the exercise of power, in the form of physical strength, verbal facility, or a superior strategy. I would advance the hypothesis that many men call it quits with visitation because they cannot tolerate feeling so powerless in the face of unrelenting conflict.

Numerous problems bring these issues to a head: experiencing passive resistance or outright hostility to his visits from his ex-wife; feeling left out of his child's upbringing ("feeling like a distant uncle," as one man put it to me); or feeling like a social director (which is common among men who have only weekend visitation). Many noncustodial fathers need to learn a new way of functioning and a new set of skills to make visitation work. They need to learn to modulate the one emotion they have been permitted, even encouraged to have—anger. They need to learn to become aware of and find constructive ways of expressing those other feelings they have not been allowed to have, the feelings on the vulnerable end of the spectrum: hurt, disappointment, rejection, sadness, shame, fear, helplessness, and even powerlessness. They need to learn how to see things from their ex-wife's point of view (and recognize, for example, that one reason she may be resisting visitation is because her time with the kids has decreased significantly due to her having to work outside of the home). Men need to learn to find ways to give their ex-wife some credit as a parent (which may help defuse that part of her hostility that stems from feeling undermined). These are not difficult skills to learn, but the stressful circumstances following divorce do not make learning easy. However, the alternative is far worse.

The Remarried Family and the New Father Role

Because the modal post-divorce family is female-headed, the typical remarried family consists of a mother with her children, who have been living together for some years as a single-parent family (and have drawn together closely during the process), and an outsider—the stepfather. He may have children of his own, living with his former wife, and with whom he has visitation. Then there is his stepchildren's father, who has visitation with them.

Remarried families are on the rise, due to the high divorce rates and the tendency of 80% of divorced adults to remarry within 3 years of their divorce. By the time this book is published, 25% of all children under 18 are expected to have lived some time in their childhood in a stepfamily.

Many of the problems that stepfathers confront have to do with establishing themselves in their new families. Many people approach second marriages with unrealistic expectations, hoping for instant love between themselves and their stepchildren. These expectations often result from attempts to compensate for feelings of failure regarding first marriages and lead to trouble very quickly, for the stepfamily is laced with visible loyalties and strung with impermeable boundaries. A stepfather must wait as long as 2 years before he is let into the family. It is not only the children with their loyalties to their biological father and to the former nuclear and single-parent families who will take their sweet time to accept their stepfather; his wife will also have some difficulty letting him into a co-parental role. This latter, somewhat paradoxical phenomenon often manifests itself in discipline encounters in which the stepfather attempts to set the limit, the child complains to the mother, who then sides with the child.

To make stepfamilies work, a stepfather needs to be realistic about the difficulties and should negotiate his role explicitly with his wife, preferably before the wedding. He also must be prepared to experience a lot of painful rejection; hence the comments made above about the visitation-father's needs for self-awareness and skills in processing vulnerable feelings apply to the stepfather as well.

By this point, it should be obvious that the comment that "being a father today is difficult" is a gross understatement. I mentioned earlier men's lack of preparation for an involved parenting role, even under the best of circumstances. But when one takes into account the stress and complexity of modern families, the urgent need for remedial education becomes quite clear. To give the reader some guidance as to how to help men become "new fathers," I will turn now to a discussion of the Fatherhood Course.

The Fatherhood Course

The Fatherhood Project at Boston University has been offering a course designed to help men become better fathers. Simply called the Fatherhood Course, it meets one evening per week, and teaches fathers communication skills, particularly learning to listen and respond to their children's feelings, and to become aware of and express their own feelings in a constructive manner. In addition, it teaches fathers about child development and child management. The course uses a skill-training format, in which fathers role-play the particular skills in relationship to situations that have emerged in their own families, with videotape used to provide instant feedback. In addition, each father receives a workbook containing exercises that can be done at home, including interactional exercises to do with his children.

The course is a psychoeducational group that can be used for prevention (with high-risk fathers). But most often it is used to facilitate the adult development of men as parents. It is thus informed by life-span developmental psychology.

The approach to fostering father's development comes from: (1) the cognitive social development literature, which describes how social perspective-taking in parents develops through a stagewise sequence; and (2) the Rogerian literature on the characteristics of effective relationships in counseling and parenting, which highlights the importance of empathy. Both literatures are utilized to help fathers learn to take their child's perspective with increasing degrees of empathic sensitivity, and to balance their child's and their own perspective on the father's role. Thus, fathers learn about the important issues with regard to the cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development of their children, such as how fathers may act as "gatekeepers" for their sons' and daughters' sex role attitudes and behaviors.

The program is designed to fit men's traditional learning styles. It is not held out as counseling, and men are not initially required to talk about their feelings (although most eventually do). Instead, it is offered as an educational program with an opportunity to develop skills. When men first walk into the room, hardware is immediately in evidence in the form of video equipment, which may provide a sense of familiarity, in terms of men's traditional relationship to machines. Furthermore, they are told that we will teach them to be better fathers in a manner comfortable to them, in much the same ways they might have learned to play a sport such as football or tennis.

The outline for the course is detailed in the Leader's Guide (Evant & Doyle, 1981a). The course is usually co-taught by the author (a father) and an advanced doctoral student in counseling psychology (who may or may not be a father himself) who has had training in parent-child

interaction and in leading structured groups. The first half of the course focuses on listening and responding to children, beginning with a session on nonverbal parental behaviors that can facilitate communication, such as staying at eye-level with the child and maintaining an open-body posture. In the next session fathers learn about responding reflectively to the content of a child's message. In the third session, fathers learn about listening empathically to a child's feelings. The fourth session is devoted to review, integration, and practice.

In the second half of the course, fathers work on speaking for themselves, beginning with a session on increasing their awareness of the thoughts and feelings that emerge that interacting with their children. This is one of the most difficult sessions because many men have been socialized to tune out most of their feelings. We begin by developing a lexicon of the full spectrum of feelings. Fathers are then taught to tune in to their feelings through watching and discussing immediate play-backs of role-plays in which feelings were engendered. By pointing out the nonverbal cues and asking such questions as "What were your feelings, Don, when you grimaced in that last segment?", fathers learn to access the ongoing flow of emotions within. Next comes a session on learning to express thoughts and feelings in a nondefensive, open manner. In the segment on acceptance, the fathers examine their own personal sensitivities in order to become more accepting of their children's feelings and behavior. The final session is devoted to termination and includes a graduation ceremony.

The program includes didactic and experiential components. A typical format for a session is as follows: (1) introduction and definition of the particular skill to be covered in a brief lecture; (2) demonstration of the skill using videotaped and live examples, usually role-plays between the two instructors; (3) discrimination training, in which the instructors role-play parent-child situations, demonstrating varying degrees of skillfulness—and with the fathers rating and discussing the role-played examples; (4) practice of the skill in role-play exercises, using videotape for immediate feedback; and (5) consolidating and transferring the skill to the interaction with their children through homework assignments from the *Father's Workbook* (Levant & Doyle, 1981b). Fathers are expected to spend 1 hour per week on homework, including readings, paper-and-pencil exercises that progress from asking the fathers to discriminate between good and poor responses to asking them to formulate their own good responses, and interactional exercises. Completed assignments are discussed in class each week.

The in-class role plays in which the fathers participate serve several important functions. They are drawn from the discussion of the previous week's homework, in particular, from the interactional exercises between father and child. It is not uncommon that several fathers will have ex-

perienced difficulties in carrying out these exercises with their children, and it is also likely that these difficulties will reflect long-term problems in the father-child relationship. By selecting the role plays in this manner, several purposes are served. For one thing, difficulties are attended to, so that hurdles are overcome and motivation remains high. It is highly possible in such short-term structured groups for unsatisfactory experiences with the homework to lead to discouragement, which can be expressed either in the form of dropping out of the group or participating at a pseudomutual level. For another, by focusing on the longer-term issues as they have emerged during the homework, we work on the structural problems in the family, but do so in a way that an optimal balance between safety and depth is achieved. Ostensibly we are working on the fathers' difficulties in learning the skills—but in the process, the fathers enact the difficulties in their relationships with their children, which then become available for modification. An additional benefit of focusing on such longer-term issues is that a climate of engagement and genuineness is created in the group.

The role plays are performed in two different ways. At times we have the father role-play himself, while another participant plays the child. In these cases, the goal is to have the father learn the skills and apply them to his interaction with his child. At other times the father role-plays his child. In these instances the intent is to help the father develop an appreciation of the child's point of view, and also to learn how his child experiences him. This latter learning can be quite profound in helping fathers modify their approach to their children.

The fathers who participate in the course come from all walks of life, from laborer to plumber to lawyer to stockbroker. Their ages have ranged from the late 20s to the mid-50s, with their children's ages ranging from early infancy to young adulthood. About half the men are married and half divorced, with a few of them remarried and working out a "reconstituted" family. Those who are divorced have custody arrangements ranging from visitation to joint custody to sole custody.

Though the men are successful in the workplace and fulfill the "good provider" role, they experience dissatisfaction with their relationships with their own fathers, or articulate a desire to not make some of the mistakes with their children that their fathers made with them. Others feel inadequate with their children, and marvel at how well their wives "do it" when it comes to simple tasks such as getting 10-year-old Tommy to bed. Mom can do it with four words, yet for Dad it is often a half-hour struggle that usually ends in tears and frustration. Some are very uncomfortable with feelings, both their own and their children's. Others get caught in the "anger trap" and become ensnared in unproductive repetitive patterns of testing and punishment.

Many assume at the onset that they know how to communicate with their children. Two fathers in particular, who thought their communication skills were adequate, were shocked to see videotaped replays of role-playing sessions. One saw himself towering over his child, the other talking from behind a newspaper. Another noted, "The idea that being a father is a learned skill never occurred to me."

About halfway through the course, after fathers have had some success at mastering the skills, some report that they are finding the skills useful not only with their children, but with their wives, and others at the workplace as well. For example, one father said:

I found the lessons in practicing communication particularly valuable. I would add the concept—the one most people miss—that communication is generally undervalued and completely misunderstood in our society. I think that people must feel as though they are doing fine, when in fact they are not dealing with the emotional level at all, in many, many cases.

And another observed:

Like I said in the beginning, not only family members, but I'm using the listening skills in my job. I'm taking those same skills that we developed, and applying them so that if I'm talking to an employee, and the employee is having a problem, I try to develop some trust with that person, establish eye contact, and respond to his statement by saying the statement back to let him know that I'm listening.

The Fatherhood Course has been evaluated (Levant & Doyle, 1983). Experimental group fathers, their wives, and one of their children were compared to control group families before and after training on several paper-and-pencil measures. Fathers' communication skills were assessed using the Sensitivity to Children Scale (in which fathers are presented with vignettes of children's behavior and are asked to respond with written statements to what they would say if the child depicted were their own) and the Porter Acceptance Scale (a multiple-choice instrument). Fathers' and mothers' views of their actual and ideal families were assessed using the Family Concept Test, a multiple-choice test that gives measures of family satisfaction (correlation between the parents' real and ideal family concepts) and family congruence (correlations between husbands' and wives' real, or ideal, family concepts). And children's perceptions of their fathers were assessed using interviews and the Kinetic Family Drawing Test, in which the child was asked to draw a picture of his or her family doing something together.

The evaluation found that training resulted in an improvement of fathers' communication skills—specifically, a significant increase in over-

all sensitivity, a significant reduction in the use of undesirable responses, a trend toward increased use of desirable responses, and a trend toward increased acceptance of the child's expression of feelings. In addition, a complex pattern of findings of fathers' and mothers' real and ideal family concepts suggested that, as a result of the course, fathers underwent a cognitive restructuring, changing their views of the ideal family.

Changes also were seen in children's perceptions of their fathers, with significantly more experimental than control group children perceiving positive changes in their relationships. A telling example was the change in one boy's pre- and post-course Kinetic Family Drawing. Before the course began the child drew a picture of a roller coaster, with the tracks filling 90% of the page. At the very top was a tiny little car. In the front seat was the boy, legs and arms akimbo, in the next seat was Mom and then Dad, and in the last seat was his brother, who appeared to be falling out of the car. After the course was over, the boy drew a picture of a spaceship running diagonally across the page in which the cockpit filled about 10% of the page. Seated at the control was Dad, next to him, Mom. At opposite sides, looking out the window, were he and his brother. From a clinical perspective, this sequence of pictures suggests a remarkable transformation of family structure and emotional climate.

Conclusion

This chapter first asked the question of whether there is a new father role. Both the evidence for such a new role and the evidence against it were presented. These conflicting lines of evidence were reconciled using LaRossa's (1989) distinction between the culture and the conduct of fatherhood: There is a change in how fatherhood is viewed in the contemporary United States toward a more nurturing role; however, the men who are trying to enact this role find themselves falling short of the cultural ideal. The author then advanced the hypothesis that the major factor producing this shortfall is that men who are fathers today were not prepared for the nurturing father role.

The second part of the chapter took a closer look at the kinds of families in which today's adult men are expected to enact the new father role: the working parent family, the post-divorce family, and the remarried family. In a very brief review, some of the more prevalent difficulties fathers face in each of these family types were highlighted.

Finally, after having made what I hope is a convincing case for the need for services for fathers, particularly fatherhood education, one such service (the Fatherhood Course developed by the author at Boston Uni-

versity) was presented in some detail. The course is unique in that it was designed specifically for men, and has been successful in engaging men.

In today's world, men are asked to "provide for their families" as well as actively father their children. They have been trained to do the former but not the latter. I have described a fatherhood course which provides fathers both the skills and support for effective parenting. Given the stress and complexity of modern families, the urgent need for remedial education to engage men to cope optimally as fathers becomes quite clear.

A number of authors in this book have alluded to the negative effect produced by the "absent father." It is my hope that the father can become reengaged in the family in expressive, nurturing, and educational ways as well as in financial and protective ways.

1. The material in the section, "The Fatherhood Course," is reprinted from Levant, R. F. (1988). Education for fatherhood. In P. Bronstein and C. P. Cowan (Eds.), *Fatherhood today: Men's changing role in the family*. New York: Wiley-Interscience. Copyright © 1988, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Reprinted by Permission.

The traditional view of the male role assumes that men derive their major life satisfaction from extrafamilial endeavors . . . yet men may be at equal or greater risk for the negative consequences of divorce.

Chapter 8

DIVORCE: ARE MEN AT RISK?

Patrick C. McKenry and Sharon J. Price

The divorce rate has more than doubled in the last 20 years to the extent that two thirds of all first marriages today are likely to end in divorce (Martin & Bumpass, 1989). Although divorce has become almost commonplace, even termed by some as a normative life transition, there is not a lot of knowledge to guide men through the transition. What we do know is focused on women as it has been widely assumed that women, with custody of children and fewer economic resources, are at greater risk for any ill effects of divorce. In addition, American society has not readily responded to the many needs of divorced individuals, especially those of men. The traditional view of the male role assumes that men derive their major life satisfaction from extrafamilial endeavors, that they are not as emotionally upset by the termination of relationships, and that they are self-sufficient and strong enough to take care of their own problems without the assistance of others. Yet research suggests that men may be at equal or even greater risk for the negative consequences of divorce and are often less able to cope with the emotional consequences. Social changes such as greater participation of women in the labor force, increased alternatives to traditional marriage, the rising standard for individual happiness in marriage, and the declining stigma of divorce have been related both to recent high divorce rates (Cherlin, 1981; Weitzman, 1981) and confusion for men who are attempting to deal with such radical change in traditional gender role prescriptions.

Divorce as Process

Divorce is perhaps best conceptualized as a developmental process that begins long before the actual physical separation. Kessler (1975) spoke of a marriage dying by inches, a little at a time, beginning early in the marriage. Although men and women may respond differently to divorce, there are no indications they experience the basic grief loss

adaptation process of divorce differently (i.e., denial, mourning, anger, and readjustment). Several authors have developed models that describe this developmental process in some detail, including Kessler, who has developed a six-stage paradigm:

1. *Disillusionment*. This initial period of marital instability is characterized by disenchantment with the marriage, fault finding with the spouse, and the realization that real differences exist in the marriage.
2. *Evolution*. This stage is described as the period of emotional divorce; focus is on taking rather than giving, and anger and hurt are openly expressed. Stress related to this stage may be evident in physical symptoms including migraine headaches, anxiety, or impotence.
3. *Detachment*. At this point the individual no longer invests in marriage and thoughts shift to the future, such as fantasies about what life would be without the spouse, assessment of the financial situation, and evaluation of the potential for future relationships.
4. *Separation*. This period of actual physical separation is the time of most stress (Weiss, 1975). Separation is a public declaration that a marriage is not working and a time of learning new roles and behaviors. Men especially will experience dramatic change in their life-styles at this time.
5. *Mourning*. The individual at this stage feels sad about the "death" of the marriage, and may also feel angry, hurt, lonely, and helpless. Although anger is generally focused toward the former spouse, a common response during this period is depression as the result of blaming oneself.
6. *Recovery*. At this point, the individual accepts that the marriage is over, and a degree of objectivity about the marriage and the former spouse develops. Divorced persons at this stage concentrate on personal growth by either engaging in a "second adolescence"—an almost vengeful pursuit of sex, travel, fun, or clothes, or exploration and hard work—curtailing their previous anxious floundering and recommencing to their life goals.

Divorce Adjustment

Much research on divorce adjustment has centered on the question of who is most adversely affected by separation and divorce, men or women. Research findings are presently inconclusive, but some evidence suggests that men are at greater risk for emotional disturbance, especially during the separation stage. The person who initiates the divorce typi-

cally has the advantage of having worked through the divorce process for some time prior to the actual decision. In most cases, it is the women who are the initiators, which means that men usually have more difficulty accepting the divorce, experience greater loneliness, are angrier, and report higher stress (Buehler, 1987; Spanier & Thompson, 1984). This phenomenon has been referred to as the "abandoned male" syndrome stemming from the growing number of women who are initiating divorce today because more options are available to them (Myers, 1986).

Men are also thought to be more vulnerable to marital separation because of their tendency to deny or suppress feelings. Men often use buffers such as work or excessive social activity to avoid dealing with emotional problems (Chiriboga & Cutler, 1978; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Weiss, 1975). Men's greater discomfort as a result of separation suggests that men may be less prepared to cope with object loss and, contrary to popular belief, experience greater difficulty in recovering from attachments (Krantzler, 1973). Also, androgynous behaviors have been related to less divorce-related distress (Bloom & Clement, 1981; Chiriboga & Thurnher, 1980), and women are typically more androgynous than men. This is consistent with Bem's (1977) work, which has found that androgynous role behaviors are more adaptive, especially during times of major stress.

In addition to greater separation-related stress, some evidence also indicates that the total divorce experience may constitute a more severe emotional impact for men (Albrecht, Bahr, & Goodman, 1983; Weiss, 1975) because they exhibit more symptoms of emotional and physical disturbances than do divorced women (Bloom & Caldwell, 1981; Covey, 1973). In addition, men have been found to take longer to adjust to divorce and experience lower levels of adjustment (Price-Bonham, Wright, & Pittman, 1982). These gender differences have been attributed to men's tendency to deny their dependency needs and their feelings about the loss of their children, friends, home, possessions, and sometimes status. (It should be noted that although men may fare less well in some respects in the short term, long-term differences between men and women may be minimized because of the greater economic assets of divorced men and their greater likelihood to remarry.)

Relationships With Former Spouses

Traditionally, it has been assumed that divorce meant complete termination of any relationship with the former spouse. Today, however, it is increasingly viewed as "normal" or appropriate for former spouses to maintain regular contact, particularly if they have children. This ac-

ceptance of a post-divorce relationship between spouses is reflected by the terms we now use to refer to these relationships, such as *former spouses* instead of *ex-spouses*, and *binuclear family* (Ahrons, 1979) instead of *post-divorce family* or *broken home*. This post-divorce relationship is still difficult for former spouses because of the lack of societal norms and role models (Ahrons, 1980), and couples often have difficulty determining where their former-spouse relationship ends and their parental relationship begins (Roberts & Price, 1985, 1986). In addition to the co-parental relationship, most divorced persons experience some feelings of attachment toward their former spouse, and this may be greater for men than for women (Gertsel, Reissman, & Rosenfield, 1985; Price-Bonham et al., 1982). This complex bond, which does not necessarily decrease with time (Kitson, 1982), may be manifested through recurrent thoughts and images of the former spouse, attempts to contact or learn about her, feelings of missing part of oneself, loneliness, and even pain (Berman, 1985; Bloom & Kindle, 1985; Weiss, 1975). In some cases, the attachment even may result in continuation of sexual relations. This attachment to a former spouse also may result in ambivalent feelings—the desire to reconcile and yet feeling angry because of the former spouse's role in the production of separation distress (Spanier & Thompson, 1984). Although some authors have contended that these former spouse attachments are dysfunctional in terms of readjustment to a new life-style (Kratzler, 1973; Kressel & Deutsch, 1977), others contend that the continuation of a former spouse relationship is desirable, primarily because of the fact that it facilitates a closer relationship between the father and his children, and it is generally maladaptive or less comfortable to maintain animosity toward a former intimate (Daniel, 1977; Wright & Price, 1986).

Historically, it was assumed that a man would be linked to a former spouse primarily for economic reasons in fulfilling his traditional role as the good provider. Today, however, in the era of changing sex roles and "no fault" divorce, this assumption has been seriously challenged. Criteria used in determining alimony awards have shifted from "fault" reasons to the needs of the wife and the ability of the husband to pay (McCubbin & Dahl, 1985). In general, only women with custodial responsibility for children, those who need transitional support to become self-supporting, and those who are incapable of becoming self-supporting are viewed by the courts as deserving of alimony (Weitzman, 1985). It cannot be assumed, however, that older women and younger women with children automatically will be awarded alimony. Rather, only 15% of all men are required to pay their former wives alimony, and this is often a "transitional" or temporary award for an average of 2 years (Weitzman, 1985). Also, it should be noted that the alimony awards are typically small—the mean award in 1983 was approximately \$3,000.

Furthermore, few husbands pay the decreed award on a regular basis; less than half of women due alimony payments in 1985 received full payment (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987).

Fathers are still legally viewed as having the primary financial responsibility for their children as determined through court-mandated child support awards. However, only about one half of the children awarded child support actually receive it (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987). Several reasons have been put forth to account for the failure of so many divorced fathers to pay the decreed child support awards. Some contend that fathers cannot afford to pay, but several authors have refuted this claim as fathers seldom are ordered to pay more than a third of their income for child support, and many fathers are better off financially after the divorce than while married (Weitzman, 1985). Some noncustodial fathers' feelings of emotional distance from their children as well as remarriage make it economically and psychologically burdensome to support two households (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Also, because of the lack of societal norms regarding divorced fathers' roles and presence in the divorced family, there may be a lack of clarity regarding their obligations. Then, too, the lack of strong enforcement mechanisms to guarantee that court-ordered child support is paid is an obvious factor. Interestingly, divorced men have indicated that even though they are not complying with child support, they state that they could and should be doing so (Haskins, Deibelstein, Akin, & Schwartz, 1987). This would suggest that men who are not fulfilling their support obligations are experiencing much guilt.

Life as a Divorced Single Man

The establishment of a new life-style may be more problematic for some men than going through the divorce itself (Spanier & Casto, 1979). Divorce usually involves extensive changes in family ties, friendships, leisure activities, and sexual behaviors (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1976).

Social Supports

Family members, especially parents, are generally very supportive in providing temporary financial assistance, housing, and a wide range of services including emotional support and child care (Albrecht et al., 1983; Spanier & Casto, 1979). Men, however, receive less support than women probably due to the fact that they usually do not have custody of their children, typically have greater economic resources, and are socialized to seem self-sufficient (McKenry & Price, in press).

The reaction of friends to divorce ranges from genuine concern to disinterest (Krantzler, 1973). Friends are often important sources of social support, but it is not unusual for divorced persons to find their pre-divorce friendships decline in interaction and importance. This change may be the result of friends "taking sides," lacking knowledge of how to incorporate a single friend into their couple-oriented world, being threatened by divorce, or merely feeling awkward (Spanier & Thompson, 1984; Weiss, 1975). In addition, divorced persons themselves may be responsible for the decline in these friendships as they move out of the neighborhood, work longer hours to meet increased economic demands, or prefer to socialize with other divorced persons (Hunt & Hunt, 1977; Spanier & Thompson, 1984; Price & McKenry, 1988).

Divorced men maintain more contact with married friends than do divorced women, and these friends tend to be very helpful (Gertsel, 1988; Hetherington et al., 1976; Milardo, 1987). This is probably because married friends are often developed through occupational roles. In addition, men without partners are viewed by society as more lonely and emotionally helpless and thus in greater need of support. Because men do have more trouble establishing social relationships, they are more likely than women to use organized activities such as continuing education, athletics, or hobbies to form friendships (Albrecht et al., 1983; McKenry & Price, *in press*).

Living Single

Men experience more difficulty in living a single life-style after divorce than do women. They are less well socialized to function autonomously and are often reluctant to master the skills necessary for independent living because these activities are not viewed as part of the socially defined male role (Johnson, 1977). Thus, the more androgynous man should be at an advantage in adapting to life as a single person.

Men may be particularly vulnerable because they have been both emotionally and physically dependent to a significant extent on their former spouse to manage their lives. Also, they have been socialized to be "strong," that is, to manage all their responsibilities without help. This show of independence may, however, be a disguise for withdrawal and inability to reorganize one's life, and indicates that such individuals are at high risk for personal distress and a reduced level of functioning (Weiss, 1975).

Dating

Perhaps the most important factor in improving the self-esteem of divorced men and women is the establishment of a satisfying intimate

relationship (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1978). Dating is an important step in this process and serves a variety of other functions including socialization to the "world of the formerly married," self-appraisal, companionship, and therapeutic support (Hunt & Hunt, 1977).

The "double standard" works as an advantage for post-divorce dating men. They more often feel it appropriate to initiate dating, and seldom have the responsibility or problems associated with child custody (Price & McKenry, *in press*). Men also have more resources to spend on dating, have fewer age constraints in selecting partners, and a man's attractiveness is not so highly related to physical appearance as is a woman's (McKenry & Price, *in press*). Yet divorced men do tend to exhibit fears that prevent them from establishing long-term relationships. These fears include rejection, loss, and damage to self-esteem. Some divorced men try to place limits on their feelings to avoid emotional commitments for fear of making "another" mistake (Hunt & Hunt, 1977). Also, men may feel awkward in a youth-oriented dating world, and they also may have difficulty adjusting to the more sexually assertive role of women (Weiss, 1975). In terms of sexuality *per se*, divorced men report satisfaction with their sexual experiences, and their sexual activity is highly correlated with their overall sense of well-being (Spanier & Thompson, 1984).

Fathers

Sources of Stress

Fatherhood seems to compound men's vulnerability to negative consequences of divorce. For the vast majority of fathers (approximately 90%), divorce means the loss of physical custody of their children. The threatened loss of their relationship with their children is, in fact, a chief complaint of men in the midst of divorce crisis (Jacobs, 1982). The father's own emotional reaction and eventual adjustment to divorce is inevitably intertwined with that of his children. Almost all children experience divorce as a major crisis event, regardless of whether it was anticipated or how "friendly" the divorce may have been. Parental divorce generates an emotional loss response in children that lasts at least 2 to 3 years (Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan, & Anderson, 1989). Although some children are remarkably resilient, many others are still dealing with divorce-related issues into adulthood (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989).

Because of the father's own emotional instability, he is often not in a position adequately to comfort his children, provide a clear, rational

explanation for the divorce, or generally to parent effectively—a phenomenon that has been termed a “diminished capacity to parent” (Wallenstein & Kelly, 1980). Especially, separated parents, when compared with parents in intact families, are less consistent and effective with discipline, are less nurturant, communicate less well, and make fewer demands for mature behaviors (Hetherington et al., 1978).

For the noncustodial father, single-parenting status usually means dealing with numerous losses—the loss of a familiar residence and neighborhood, daily routine, accustomed social supports, and, in many cases, the loss of a meaningful relationship with his children. This transition requires radical restructuring of his household and family roles.

Additional stress is created for these noncustodial fathers because of their lack of skills in managing a household. In fact, many fathers initially live what has been described as a “chaotic” life style as they attempt to maintain a household, economically provide for their children, and parent their children without the support of a spouse. For example, noncustodial fathers, compared to married men, are more likely to rely on carry-out meals, eat at irregular times, have more erratic sleep patterns, and have more difficulty with household tasks (Hetherington et al., 1976).

Divorced fathers who economically support two households often experience financial problems. These problems are accentuated by remarriage as the fathers have new responsibilities and a spouse who may resent resources going to a former spouse. In addition, divorced fathers may be in continual conflict with former spouses over finances. Thus, many divorced fathers will increase their work load to compensate as well as to escape emotionally from the trauma associated with the divorce and establishment of a new life style. This tendency of divorced fathers to increase their work load combined with an emotional instability to work effectively actually increases their level of stress (Price & McKenry, 1988).

Noncustodial fathers, like other divorced men, usually experience social isolation and loneliness. Many divorced fathers feel inept in living as single persons because they have lived much of their adult lives as married with children. These feelings of loneliness and isolation, along with a loss of social definition, contribute to the frantic social and sexual activity commonly seen in newly separated men (Myers, 1986).

Parenting Difficulties

As they move beyond the initial crisis period of separation and divorce, noncustodial fathers continue to experience difficulties in parenting. They still have trouble communicating with their children, es-

establishing appropriate maturity demands, and remaining consistent in their discipline. Because many fathers relied heavily on their wives to initiate activities and communicate with their children, they even may lack the knowledge of how to interact with their children (Moreland & Schwebel, 1981). Divorced fathers thus often are consumed with feelings of incompetence and failure as parents. These feelings are reinforced by a society that blames men for divorce and fails to support or even acknowledge the importance of their noncustodial parenting role. In addition, some fathers experience much guilt regarding their children being deprived of both parents and thus compensate by being permissive and overly attentive to them, often in the form of providing extravagant gifts or activities—a phenomenon that some have described as the "Disneyland" or "Santa Claus" father. On the other hand, some fathers may feel that the children are the source of all their problems and thus may have hostile feelings toward them (Fedder & Scherman, 1987).

Noncustodial fathers do not parent in isolation from the former spouse, although this may be desired in many cases. Their parental relationship does not terminate with legal divorce, and the cooperation achieved in co-parenting by former spouses is highly related to positive outcomes for their children. Some men and women who have not adjusted to their divorce may not only fail to cooperate in parenting, but may, in fact, use the children as pawns to vent anger toward their former spouse. Such conflict also may serve as a way for the divorced spouse, especially men, to maintain an emotional relationship following divorce (Hetherington et al., 1989).

Most noncustodial fathers report dissatisfaction with the visitation experiences with their children. Many fathers experience the visitations with their children as painful because each visit forces them to renew the mourning process. Many begin to feel that they are no longer fathers, that they are no longer needed, and that their authority as a parent has been eroded (Atkin & Rubin, 1976). Some noncustodial fathers even reduce contact with their children because it is so painful (Hetherington et al., 1976) or in extreme cases may resort to child snatching or kidnapping. Many other fathers find visitation to be so artificial and meaningless that over time they gradually reduce contact.

Thus, noncustodial fathers increasingly socialize with their children from an emotional distance and with a great deal of laxity, becoming pals more than parents. In a national survey of children several years after divorce, it was found that fathers averaged only two visits per month, and almost half of the children had not seen their father in the past year (Furstenberg & Nord, 1985). Fathers are more likely to visit younger children and sons frequently and consistently as these relationships are perceived as easier to maintain because these children are more responsive (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Noncustodial fathers' relinquish-

ing of caregiving responsibilities after divorce also may be related to conflict with their former spouse, inability or unwillingness to maintain required financial support, barriers imposed by the legal system that fail to support fathers' rights, or merely a lack of interest in parenting.

When a father does have responsibility for his children on a frequent basis or for long periods of time, he is more likely to view his role as significant, to be less depressed, and to continue to provide emotional and financial support (Friedman, 1980; Lowery & Settle, 1985). Despite the lack of preparation for the single-parent role and the many problems associated with the noncustodial parent role, a substantial number of noncustodial fathers do report closer, more meaningful relationships with their children than existed during their marriage.

Custody Alternatives

In recent years, fathers have sought more involvement in the post-divorce parenting of their children. As a result, an increasing number of divorcing fathers now seek primary or joint custody, although this group is still a small minority. Most fathers who seek primary custody do so out of love and concern for their children, not to hurt their former spouse or because they believe their spouse is an unfit parent, as is often believed. The father who is most likely to seek custody tends to be more highly educated and financially secure, and his children are older, more often boys (Norton & Glick, 1986).

Fathers with primary custody initially report feeling confused and apprehensive about their parenting abilities, but most soon indicate feeling comfortable and competent as single fathers—regardless of their reason for seeking primary custody (Hetherington et al., 1989; Risman, 1986). These fathers clearly seem to have a more meaningful paternal role than do noncustodial fathers (Stewart, Schwebel, & Fine, 1986). In addition, it has been found that custodial fathers experience many of the same problems of custodial mothers (Mendes, 1976). However, some fathers with primary custody report feeling ostracized by the community because of their unique status.

Increasingly joint custody is being sought by parents and even advocated by courts to provide children with greater accessibility to both parents and to maintain greater equity between former spouses. Joint legal custody sometimes includes joint physical custody, but usually it is merely legal recognition of the rights of both parents to make major decisions regarding their children; under joint custody, physical custody is usually awarded to the mother with liberal visitation given the father (Flynn, 1987). Preliminary studies have reported much satisfaction with the arrangement by both parents and children; however, many of these

studies involved amicable divorces in which parents were able to make sacrifices to maintain parental responsibilities (Hetherington et al., 1989). The success of joint custody is contingent on parental cooperation, flexibility, mutual support, and respect—characteristics that usually do not describe most marriages at the time of divorce (Price & McKenry, 1988). Divorcing parents thus should be sure that they can develop and maintain such a relationship with one another if joint custody is to be beneficial to their children.

Case Studies

The research findings on the effects of divorce on men are reflected in the following case scenarios of three men in different stages of the divorce process: (a) a father experiencing separation distress; (b) a man experiencing difficulty adjusting to a single life-style; and (c) a remarried father dealing with loyalty issues.

Lee

Lee and Elizabeth are in the process of dissolving a 28-year marriage. They have two children, a daughter, Sue, who is married, and a son, Don, who is a senior in high school. Lee and Elizabeth have gradually grown apart through the years of their marriage and have very rationally decided to divorce. They have reached a mutually satisfactory settlement agreement out of court that will allow both to live comfortably in their newly chosen life-styles. The pre-divorce relationship between Lee and Elizabeth has been mature and conciliatory to the extent that Lee has remained in the family home while searching for a suitable residence of his own. On the morning of the day Lee moves from the home, a myriad of unexpected feelings emerge that have been previously suppressed. Lee goes through the typical morning routine of breakfast with his spouse and son with intense feelings of pain, loss, and failure buried in ritual and the stoicism of the male role. As Elizabeth leaves for work and his son goes to school, the reality of the impending divorce is overwhelming. As Lee moves around the house waiting for the moving van to arrive, his mind becomes a kaleidoscope of memories. He has a need to say good-bye to each room and attempt to capture the positive aspects of his life reflected in each room. When Lee arrives at his new apartment, he is struck by the significant difference between his former and his new "home"—it is smaller, more compact, has few familiar furnishings, and has the sound of neighbors barely audible in the background. Lee begins putting away his belongings realizing that for the first time in his adult

life, he is truly responsible for his own life, and this feels both good and bad. He knows that the decision to divorce was right, but he also feels an enormous loss and is apprehensive about the impending changes in his life.

Doug

Doug is 28 years old and has been divorced for 1 year from his wife of 4 years, Sandra. Sandra initiated the divorce because of Doug's failure to support her career goals. Doug is now having difficulty establishing a stable life-style as a single person. He hates being alone and spends much of his free time in bars and nightclubs. Doug has had numerous superficial sexual relationships to boost his wounded ego, and he has resorted to excessive drinking and spending to ward off feelings of depression. He has been neglecting his job responsibilities as a sales representative and is progressively getting into debt. Doug is still emotionally attached to Sandra and harbors reconciliation fantasies. Sandra is sympathetic, but she is further along in the adjustment process; she is involved in a new relationship and is experiencing much satisfaction from success in graduate school. Doug sees few of his friends as he feels guilty about his divorce and new life-style and also generally feels "out of place" with them. As a result, Doug feels very isolated and lonely, and he is unable to develop the new sources of social support that would help him adjust to the divorce. Finally, his boss confronts him both about his job performance and his life-style in general and gives him the name of a counselor. Frightened and ashamed by this confrontation, Doug agrees to see the counselor. Doug is eventually referred for group counseling with individuals experiencing similar problems. After some initial reluctance to participate, Doug soon begins to trust the group and finds their insights and support very helpful.

John

John is a 38-year-old high school teacher who has been remarried for 2 years after being divorced from his first wife, Karen, for 3 years. He was involved in a highly conflictual marriage with Karen for almost 10 years prior to the divorce; they have two daughters, currently age 8 and 10. Karen has primary custody, and John has weekend visitation rights. John's current wife, Diane, also has two children, a son, 7, and a daughter, 6. Diane's husband left her early in her marriage, and she and her children have had minimal contact with him since. John and Diane are happily married, and John has a very close relationship with his stepchildren. John's relationship with his own children is not as sat-

isfactory. Prior to his remarriage, John had begun to see his daughters less regularly. He felt that his visits were more upsetting than beneficial for him and his daughters. He felt more like a visitor than family member, he lacked confidence in his ability to interact with his children, and he began to resent giving up his weekends to child care. After meeting Diane, a secretary at the school where he was employed, his frequency of visitation further declined. He felt awkward bringing his children around his "girlfriend" and her children. After John and Diane got married, John's life became centered on his "new" family. Diane doesn't overtly discourage John's visitation with his children, but she doesn't facilitate his involvement either. Karen, his former spouse, refuses to agree to modify the visitation schedule to allow greater visitation during the summer and holidays when John has more free time. John feels guilty about the satisfaction he has found with Diane and her children and his failure to be the same kind of involved father with his own children.

Intervention

Many professionals involved with divorce are modifying traditional approaches designed to strengthen marriage (and thus prevent divorce) to include recognition of the reality of divorce and the needs of divorcing individuals. Many of these intervention approaches are gender-focused, that is, they deal specifically with issues unique to men or women. Some of these recently developed sources of assistance include divorce therapy, group approaches, mediation, services for divorced fathers and their children, and self-help materials.

Despite an increasing number of sources of assistance to divorced or divorcing individuals, men are far less likely than women to seek them out. Such reluctance is related to male socialization patterns of self-sufficiency, independent problem solving, and inhibition of feelings. As a result men are prone to use denial and avoidance in dealing with marital stress (Brown & Fox, 1978). To seek out help is to acknowledge vulnerability and weakness and thus to seem unmanly (Mivers, 1986). Men's greater distress during separation and divorce may, in fact, be related to their emotional inexpressiveness and their attempt to resolve their problems independently.

Divorce Therapy

As previously mentioned, many men experience divorce as a subjective sense of abandonment and are not well prepared to deal with

this narcissistic injury (Myers, 1986). For most men, their wives are their closest intimate—often the only person to whom they can express their feelings (Tamir, 1982). Thus, some men are unable emotionally to resolve their relationship on their own or with the help of familiar sources of social support, and thus are in need of some form of professional intervention. Marital crises often provide the occasion in which men who have emotional problems will seek professional assistance out of desperation. Tasks and goals for these men typically center around ventilation of feelings (especially anger, abandonment, hurt, failure, and guilt), regaining self-esteem (both sexual and social), and understanding and working through problems of trust with women, reestablishing intimacy in a new relationship, avoiding self-destructive behaviors, and learning co-parenting skills (Myers). Divorced or divorcing men will approach therapy ambivalently, and when they do, their goals may not be realistic. Because they lag behind their spouse in the mourning process and do not accept the reality of divorce as readily, many men will want to engage in marital therapy as a possible means of reconciliation as opposed to individual therapy to adjust to the divorce (Myers).

Divorce therapy *per se* is an increasingly popular therapeutic alternative that is designed to (a) aid those individuals considering divorce or those divorcing in determining whether their needs can be met within their present marriage or (b) assist them in the process of divorce (Brown, 1976). This form of marriage and family therapy recognizes divorce as a rational alternative and not a dysfunctional or pathological behavior as it has traditionally been viewed by marriage and family therapists.

Divorce therapy may be offered by therapists in private practice, clergy, social service agencies, conciliation counselors, or divorce mediators. Typically divorce therapy focuses on the individual although sometimes spouses as well as other family members are included. Because divorce therapy is a recently developed alternative, exact figures of use, techniques, and evaluations are only beginning to appear in the literature. It does seem that most divorce therapists utilize a grief loss perspective and focus on helping clients "work through" or mourn the losses that divorce represents. In addition, divorce therapists typically help their clients deal with many practical issues related to divorce such as economics, family law, parent-child relationships, and establishing new relationships and social supports. Consequently, many divorce therapists are involved in both the decision to divorce as well as the litigation process.

Group Approaches

Divorce therapy may take the form of small group process to enable the divorced-divorcing man to both work through the grief process and

acquire group benefits of social skill development, social support, and learning through the experiences of others. As aforementioned, for too many men, social support is minimal or an altogether deprived facet of their lives; thus groupwork, especially men-only membership, may prove useful and can have great worth beyond the group's ostensible purpose (Knott, 1987). Group therapy has the same goals as individual therapy, but is more short-term, problem-specific, and less expensive.

Educational groups usually focus on helping divorced individuals deal with more practical issues as well as facilitating self-esteem. These groups usually take the form of (a) short lectures followed by discussion, (b) workshops, or (c) social gatherings where information is informally shared. These groups are sponsored by churches, men's groups, various community organizations such as the YMC A, or organizations with specific interest in divorce such as Parents Without Partners. Various topics are presented including practical skill development, spiritual development, and personal growth (Fedder & Scherman, 1987). Although these groups often are based on a grief-loss model of adjustment to divorce, they stop short of formal therapy. They do, however, serve as reliable sources of information and referral for those needing more assistance.

Self-help groups also have an educational focus, but they exist primarily to offer emotional support to their members. These groups are primarily directed toward the recently separated or divorced who are most in need of encouragement, support, and enhancement of their self-esteem. Members usually take full responsibility for any program as well as for the group's leadership. Some groups emphasize dissemination of knowledge as men typically are not aware of all the community services available to them (Fedder & Scherman, 1987). Men's support groups are one popular variation of the self-help group. These are usually small groups of 6-10 members who meet without a leader to discuss whatever issues or problems are important to the members at the time. Other special interest self-help groups, such as Adult Children of Alcoholics, also deal with many divorce-related issues.

Divorce Mediation

Another recent professional response to the needs of divorcing individuals is divorce mediation. Although mediation has long been used in resolving labor-management conflicts and international disputes, it has only recently been applied to interpersonal conflicts. Mediation has been applied to the divorce process to reduce the acrimony and conflict engendered by traditional adversarial legal procedures that focus on blame and fault, thereby prohibiting rational decision making.

The mediator's goal is to assist divorcing clients in separating economic and other practical issues from emotional ones and to focus on

the future and the whole family and not on individual gain. The mediator maintains a counselor's role with the couple, but if serious emotional issues arise, most mediators will refer the client to other professionals as the mediator's task is to facilitate a mutually satisfactory settlement agreement, not to practice individual or family therapy (Haynes, 1981). Divorce mediation is offered by private mediation services, therapists-in-private practice, and court-affiliated family or conciliation services; in some jurisdictions couples with young children are required by courts to go through mediation. Divorce mediation has been evaluated and found to be superior to adversarial procedures in terms of ease of reaching a settlement and satisfaction with the settlement agreements (Sprinkle & Sturm, 1985). It is also thought that men benefit more, both emotionally and financially, from mediation than from traditional legal procedures (Price & McKee, 1988).

Services for Fathers and Their Children

As previously mentioned, a father's adjustment to divorce is made more difficult by the needs of his children and his need to continue get an important involvement if only on an independent basis. Many services for children associated at least tangentially with the larger family system, but increasingly there are programs focused on the single parent or father in the single father per se.

Many of these programs are based in the public schools. Through continuing or adult education courses, fathers may find specific courses such as *Coping as a Single Parent*, or course on general parent education strategies such as *Systematic Training for Effective Parenting* (STEP) or *Parent Effectiveness Training* (PET). Some schools with co-operating agencies offer behavioral management classes or groups for fathers who are experiencing difficulty in disciplining, acting out, overly aggressive, or noncompliant children might find these helpful.

Classrooms in which increasingly have been encouraged and it must be said with divorce-related issues than students face. Many of their interventions require parental cooperation if not involvement. Teachers are also good sources of information regarding reading materials for fathers and their children, professional referrals, and general advice regarding communicating and interacting with children. Teachers frequently become very close to children during the period of their parents' separation and divorce by providing the structure, continuity, attention, and tolerance that may be lacking in the children's home environment; the classroom teachers may even become informal parent substitutes during this period (Skeen & McKee, 1980).

Schools through their psychological services are beginning to offer direct therapeutic interventions for children and their parents, often through

group experiences with the child or with the child and parents (e.g., Strauss & McGinn, 1987). Such groups serve to increase self-esteem and coping skills in children, decrease behavioral problems, increase parenting skills, and decrease stress for children and parents.

Many divorced fathers complain that their children do not want to talk with them about their feelings, and therefore, they are unsure how their children feel (Teshler, Scherman, & Sheridan, 1981). Bibliotherapy can be an effective mechanism to facilitate father-child discussion of divorce and its related changes in life-styles. Many excellent children's books can be read or discussed together to allow for expression of feelings and to identify problems between father and child (see listing by Pardeck & Pardeck, 1987). Teachers, as aforementioned, are also good sources of reading materials.

Divorced fathers also should be aware of various clinical services available to their children. Many counseling approaches have been specifically developed for children and their families who are experiencing divorce-related problems. These programs tend to be structured, of limited duration, and crisis-oriented or problem-specific. Divorce has been recognized as especially traumatic for children, and professional intervention is widely advocated (e.g., Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Such counseling is not intended to effect major personality changes and may therefore be insufficient for some particularly disturbed children; these children would need in-depth therapy that focuses on particular emotional disturbance such as guilt, dread, anger.

Because children evidence a common pattern of reaction to divorce and are often in need of emotional support, group therapy approaches have been widely used and shown to be successful. Like schools, the clinical community is taking a more systemic, ecological approach by involving fathers and other family members in their treatment modalities.

Self-Help Materials

Numerous self-help books are available and recommended during treatment that provide insight and suggestions. Some available books include the following: *From a Woman's Point of View* (Rosenthal & Kessler, 1981); *Children's Divorce* (Kramer, 1971); *Single Father* (Hendrick, Geller, & Kew-Lock, 1979); *Rebuilding: When Your Relationship Ends* (Fisher, 1981); *The Patient Book About Divorce* (Gardner, 1977); and *Divorce: The Man's Complete Guide to Winning* (Vail, 1979). Some books provide exercises to facilitate growth and positive self-appraisal (e.g., Kessler, 1977; Krugma, 1987). Also, a variety of films, both educational and popular, deal with divorce issues; some of these include *Husbands*, *Kramer vs. Kramer*, *Over-*

in a Purposeful and Sensitive Way. Maximum benefit can be obtained from discussion of these books and films with others.

Conclusion

Although research is limited, increasing evidence suggests that men, because of their traditional sex role socialization, are particularly vulnerable to many negative consequences of divorce. Also, because of this socialization, men involved in divorce are neither able to acknowledge their symptomatology nor to seek help. Divorced fathers' participation involvement with their children also has been limited by this narrow socialization for instrumental roles, especially the "good provider" family role. However, with the progressive movement toward more egalitarian roles, with continuing high divorce rates, and with most women seeking opportunities outside the home, men should gradually move into more adrogonous roles and behaviors that will allow them to cope more successfully with divorce and maintain their obligations to their children. Also, society is increasingly recognizing the stress associated with divorce and is viewing separation and divorce as a normal developmental transition in the lives of people rather than deviant behavior. As a result, more informal and formal support systems are evolving for divorcing divorced men and women.

Counselors can become skilled guides for gay and bisexual men in their journey to healthy identity formation.

Chapter 9

GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN: DEVELOPING A HEALTHY IDENTITY

Stephen Parker and Ted Thompson

This chapter contains two linked, yet distinct sections. The first addresses the elements of healthy identity formation as specifically applied to gay and bisexual men. The second section examines approaches that might be useful to therapists and counselors when dealing with gay and bisexual men. Although the elements of healthy identity formation described in this chapter are not limited to gay or bisexual men, these particular elements are critical to these men. Likewise, the approaches to therapy described below are not meant to be an exhaustive list of therapeutic techniques, but rather attitudinal perspectives germane to gay and bisexual clients across the entire range of therapeutic technique.

During the past 7 years a substantial literature has emerged concerning psychotherapy with gay and bisexual clients. Among the best are the book-length efforts by Coleman (1988), Friedman (1988), Gonsiorek (1982), Mattson and McWhirter (1984), and Stein and Cohen (1986). To date, most of this work is built upon models of "coming out" or identity formation that describe the process of recognizing one's "gayness" as metaphorically linear (Emley-Hagenbrack, 1989). One might be led to believe, therefore, that integrated identity is a goal, an end, or a destination. It seems more likely to us that it functions as a pathway, a means, a direction along which issues of sexual orientation flow into the broader stream of our adult development. We recognize the need for more accurate metaphors for development than a temporal line.

We also understand homosexuality to be a part of but not the sole defining characteristic of a person's identity. "There is more to having a gay heart," as one client put it, than the gender of sexual partners. Laura Brown (1988) urged us to focus on the "central understandings" of this "gay heart" and not just on homosexuality. It is important, she continued, to include in our knowledge and work the domains of human experience that tend to drop off the ends of a "normal" distribution and

out of sight into the land of "special topics." She encouraged a reconstruction of psychological thought to encompass a knowledge of human experience, complementary to the "scientific" facts and centered in the deeply subjective experiences of gender, race, and orientation. Simply, we will focus on the individual and cultural contexts of the gay and bisexual man.

We intend to not focus on the "why" of homosexuality (Morley, 1987). The search for causes has often carried with it subtle assumptions of pathology we do not share. It is frequently a short leap from notions of cause to notions of cure, which have revealed themselves to be ineffective, shaming, or dangerous (Martin, 1981). Rather, like many things human, we suspect that causation is likely to be multiple in a way that will forever elude precise quantification or specification. F. F. Schurman, in his *Guide for the Perplexed* (1977), made the argument that positivist science is of assistance in resolving only convergent problems, those that clarify and resolve with the generation of increasingly specific and carefully controlled information. We argue that like "poor," gender, sexual orientation, and sexuality in general belong to the class of "divergent" problems that become larger and murkier when bound to a materialistically empirical scientific method. Let us now consider elements of healthy identity formation for gay and bisexual men.

Healthy Identity Formation

Our objective is to focus on those elements that facilitate the process of healthy identity formation. In doing so we hope to touch on some intrapsychic dynamics that evolve from that process and the environmental pressures that effect those dynamics.

The dilemma we face is the ambiguity of "healthy identity formation." These words have subjective connotations. Healthy according to whom? What population of people? Identity in accordance with what cultural subgroup? What may be healthy for one group may be considered less than healthy for another. Because of this ambiguity we need to make two clarifying statements before directly listing the elements of healthy identity formation.

First, the identity of an individual depends in large measure on the cultural context within which that person develops. We tend to think in homogeneous terms as though there is no diversity within the population. Clearly a great deal of diversity exists, socioeconomic, age, race, nationality, and so on.

Second, we make the mistake of focusing on sexual development as the single most important characteristic of identity formation. Histori-

cally, discussions of healthy development have dominated the literature as though the sexual aspect of the gay individual is the principal adjustment factor. As mentioned above, the basic issues involved in identity formation are similar whether the individual be gay or heterosexual. It is the social stigma and cultural milieu within which the gay individual lives that affects the nature and focus of the formation process. Forming an identity is not intrinsically hindered by being homosexual, but rather by the labels and connotations of deviance attached to it.

With these clarifications, let us examine seven elements that affect healthy identity formation for gay and bisexual men.

First, identity formation occurs within the context of a normative heterosexual population. It is impossible to discuss the identity development of gay men without recognizing the context within which that identity is formed. The individual who is gay learns about himself in contrast to rather than as part of the larger society. Imagine learning about love and sexuality in a heterosexual world where your preference is for people of the same gender?

As a result, knowing oneself becomes an experience of duality. One develops a sense of who one is, as well as a sense of who one is not among the larger "different-than-myself" population. Minorities who live within a White majority population know this experience of duality well. The languages are different, the references are different, the sensibilities are different, the clothes can be different, and so on.

Second, because of this duality, the search for a healthy identity is a search for congruence and balance. Developing a sense of congruence between internal perceptions and images of self in contrast to external perceptions and reflections of self is essential for the gay man. That which he is experiencing inside is either affirmed and supported or rejected and denied by the reflections and perceptions received from external sources. Balance means weighing the occasionally conflicting information that comes from the heterosexual world and the homosexual community. When a sense of congruence exists, a bridge can be built between oneself and something greater than oneself. Usually this bridge is built between the individual and the gay community. This community can provide a place in which one can more readily find congruence and balance.

Two major variables affect congruence: the social context and the notion of a continuum of "homosexuality." The larger social context is obviously heterosexual, and it is from this context that the definition of "health" is derived. Any group of people seen to be outside this normative population is by definition viewed as abnormal or unhealthy. To say out loud that one is gay is by definition an admission of unhealthiness according to the dominant society's thinking.

This has resulted in damaged identities and has been a pervasive attitude in both the psychological and psychiatric literature. Until very recently homosexuality was considered to be a psychiatric disorder. This notion of "unhealthiness" was indirectly challenged by the research conducted by Kinsey at Indiana University between 1958 and 1963. This study represents in part the single largest study in the United States that has systematically explored the incidence of homosexuality among the general population. Research subsequent to Kinsey's indicates that approximately 10% of the population describe themselves as homosexuals. Rather than seeing himself as one of the isolated few, the gay man becomes part of a substantial entity within the population.

The second variable affecting congruence is the change in the notion of "either-or" identification of attraction to the same sex. Kinsey described a continuum along which individuals had a range of attraction possibilities. Rather than being only homosexual or heterosexual, people have the capacity to love and lust along the continuum. This is a dramatic example of Jung's notions of animus and anima, the male and female within each of us. Therefore, as the size of the gay population was identified and the notion of either-or was blurred, individuals were better able to find congruence and to feel a part of the normative group. The overall effect was that of sharpening the focus of congruence between internal and external perceptions.

The third element of healthy identity formation is the recognition that not all homosexuals are alike. When a gay man recognizes this, he can begin to explore his own identity with all its facets. Our metaphor for this is a prism. To the naked eye, before striking a prism, sunlight seems consistently colorless, but nothing more. After striking the prism, however, the beam breaks into a spectrum of colors. If the heterosexual majority sees gay men as only sexual beings, then regardless of individual behavior, that individual will be "gay." The single preoccupation with sexual issues omits the vision of the remaining colors in the spectrum.

The fourth element is dealing with the challenge of the inexpressive man. Gay men are brought up to be conventionally male, and thereby taught not to recognize, feel, or express their emotions. The ability to perceive, accept, and express these aspects of one's being reveals considerable information about one's identity. Recognition, acceptance, and expression of feelings become crucial steps in the formation of healthy identity. This particular element is similar for both heterosexual and gay men. Divergence occurs as the gay man begins to understand that some of his feelings are neither shared nor supported by others around him. Self-esteem must be established through contact with others like himself. In this sense the next element is particularly important.

The fifth element of healthy identity formation is finding a group, a tribe. The gay community is a valuable resource for the individual

Because he lives in a predominantly heterosexual culture, the individual may continually experience frustration and loneliness. Because the society at large can be homophobic and punitive toward gay men, an essential feature of healthy identity formation is finding an emotional sanctuary. The salvation is to develop and utilize the support and sense of belonging one receives from the greater group that solidifies and validates an emerging identity.

Our sixth element is the necessity for the gay man to deepen his ability to be honest with himself initially, and then to be honest with others. This honesty involves looking introspectively for those parts of himself that are both pleasing and frightening, and then to acknowledge their existence. For the gay man this experience may bring a heightened sense of difference between himself and others. The tendency is to hide these facets of the self that create a sense of dissonance or anxiety.

Most difficulty may come in being honest about one's fears. The knowledge that one's feelings differ from others creates fear. At first a gay man will grope for words to label his feelings, being unable to find a language different from the majority's. These labels are needed to help articulate and define his experience. The warnings against being different are experienced in countless verbal and nonverbal messages, all of which invoke fears of rejection. Working through the fear presents a developmental issue that is unique to minority populations within the majority culture. The question becomes, "How much of yourself do you dare to be?"

Finally, we are still left with the nagging question of "Where does sexuality fit into this picture?" In effect the process of identity development involves the integration of the individual's sense of sexuality and its associated behaviors into the larger personality structure. This includes finding a sense of balance and perspective by the sexual self so that its behaviors do not dominate nor cancel out. Burgess (1940) spoke of the conversion of sexual behavior into sexual conduct. As he described it, "conduct is behavior as prescribed or evaluated by the group . . . it is not simply external, observable behavior, but behavior that expresses a norm of evaluation" (p. 228). The idea of converting sexual behavior into sexual conduct represents a step toward gaining perspective and balance for the gay man. In this way the individual gains a value orientation that develops his ability to trust his own feelings and conduct in relation to himself as well as toward others.

These elements are not meant to be linear and were not presented in any particular order. As with the journey described in the last chapter of this book, the route can be circuitous. Each of these elements, in our experience, are necessary for healthy identity formation in gay men. Let us now look at approaches therapists can take to working with gay clients.

Therapeutic Approaches

Our first approach is conceptual. We find it helpful to assume that we are assisting our clients in a recovery process from "egodystonic heterosexuality" to paraphrase the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Third Edition* (American Psychiatric Association, 1980). Even though this is not an accepted diagnostic category, the phrase describes in a broad way how the normalizing development of a healthy sense of self as gay or bisexual is postponed by the environmental demand to assume a heterosexual identity dissonant with one's deepest feelings, a demand to become, as it were, invisible. To assume a heterosexual orientation is counter to and corrosive of healthy ego functioning for a gay man.

Grace (1977) described coming out as a recovery of "lost chronological adolescence," adolescence set aside by the task of "passing" as straight or trying to become straight. Gonsiorek (1982) described the difference between genuine borderline personality organization and an "overlay" of borderline features that are generated, in part, from an intense dissonance between a person's deeply subjective sense of self and the requirements of an inauthentic heterosexual identification. Helping our clients let go of a heterosexual identification allows them, and us too, major freedoms.

The first freedom we gain from this conceptualization of our work is from a monolithic view of homosexuality. It becomes easier to perceive "homosexualities" when we do not take a purely heterosexual view. Bell and Weinberg (1978) identified many different life style types for homosexuals: closed (monogamous) coupled, open coupled, functional (i.e., single people with many partners and little apparent distress), dysfunctional (the "psychiatric" population upon which most of the early pathologically based research on homosexuality was conducted), and, finally, asexual. Freedom from a monolithic view of a man's homosexuality facilitates the breakdown of stereotypes and opens the way to an understanding of his sexuality in all its considerable complexity (Klein, 1978).

Second, we are freed from the habit of pathologizing processes of normal development, a habit that has grown out of the generalized stigmatization of homosexuality in the larger culture and the resultant research bias in the direction of pathological populations. Viewed from the perspective of heterosexual expectations of development, the emotional experience of the intense "catch-up" development that occurs during coming out can easily be misunderstood. For example, developing a sense of social and sexual competence consonant with one's repressed or suppressed longings can result in an intense process of

sexual exploration. Such exploration can be vulnerable to misdiagnosis as compulsive or addictive sexuality. In our clinical experience, when the developmental need is met, the high rate of sexual activity abates. Thus not pathologizing our clients increases the integrity of their own ego functioning.

The second approach to our clients underlines the importance of helping them work through grief and loss. This process heals the corrosive effects of the stigma of being labeled "different." Everyone has to face losses; gay and bisexual men face the ongoing loss of much that the larger culture says is necessary to the "good life." Potent issues of loss occur over the entire continuum of identity development and are central to healthy identity development.

It is not enough in therapy to help gay people transform a negative self-image into a positive one because the world into which they emerge is, quite literally, "out to get them." Not only must gay people give up attachment to what might have been but wasn't, they must also let go of what might be now and isn't and what the future might have held but won't (Fortunado, 1982, p. 89).

Loss of membership, at least in part, in the majority culture is the first problem. It then becomes necessary to create one's own alternative vision of a "good life," that is, one that is existentially authentic, interpersonally respectful, and rewarding. This cannot occur unless these particular losses are acknowledged and grieved and cease to occupy the person's attention, consciously or unconsciously (Dorn, 1989).

Our third approach addresses the need to know intimately our own internalized homophobia and heterosexism. This may seem an obvious claim. Its tendency to drop into the background, however, prompts us to emphasize it here. To the extent that our culture operates from heterosexual values and stereotypes and to the extent that our families embody those values, it is common sense that we each have internalized those values along with the rest of our familial behavioral inheritance. Without the ability to cultivate an awareness of its presence and operation through supervision, peer supervision, or other professional development, it is likely that our internalized heterosexism will surface unconsciously and provoke in some way a failure of empathy. Neither of the authors expects the vestiges of internalized heterosexism to disappear completely, just as is true of racism. We have found the exploration of empathic failures with clients and colleagues to be a vital component of necessary accountability. Clients often have little or no experience of this kind of relational repair, much less modeling of immediate awareness of the impact of internalized heterosexism. Among colleagues, this accountability keeps our growth alive and relieves some of people's perfectionistic fear of failure.

This sort of accountability also helps us to find the limits of our knowledge, both intellectual and experiential, and assists us in deciding when we can help and when we should refer our clients to someone else. For instance, a therapist working with a man who is just coming out needs to know the available resources in a personal enough way to fit them with a particular client's interest pattern and to assist him through foreseeable barriers and objective risks. Another example is that a family with an emerging gay or bisexual member sometimes cannot get a validation of their anger at the loss of their dreams for this person from anyone else than a therapist identified as versed in gay or bisexual issues. In our experience these families have tended to stay stuck until this validation occurs. The appropriate response in this instance might well be a referral to a therapist who is "out" to the community. Another lesson of accountability has been to demonstrate in small ways that we are aware of our homophobia by keeping some gay-oriented reading materials around the office and waiting room.

The last approach that emerges from our perspective as facilitators of recovery from "ego-dystonic heterosexuality" is the need to cultivate empathic bridges. Many of us who work with this client population are gay and bisexual and have that deep subjectivity directly available in our work. It is most likely that the majority do not. Because empathy is the healing component of our work, it is essential for those who are not gay or bisexual to operate from those aspects of their experience that provide a good enough analogue.

The argument that only a gay or bisexual man can understand another is intolerably perfectionistic and would preclude the possibility of much common understanding. A recovering alcoholic, for example, knows well the process of assuming an invisible identity that individuals stigmatized by society experience. People recovering from sexual abuse or those coming out of celibate life understand the process of discovering a new sense of sexuality and the intense "catch up" development that is involved. Those who experienced police or cancer in the 1950s know the irrational terror of contagion in others that gay and bisexual men infected with the human immunodeficiency virus now face. Recovering adult children of dysfunctional families of all sorts know what it is to have lost the early affirmation of one's deepest feelings by parents and to have assumed a fake identity, role bound and oriented toward others' expectations at the expense of one's own needs and desires.

We could enumerate a long list of "good enough" analogies here. If we did, it would become clear that all of them encompass recovery from some trauma, a woundedness often inflicted by way of social stigma. It is in these parts of our lives where we have healed some significant wounds that we can look for the footings upon which to build our em-

pathic bridges to others. We can build on those footings by coming to know gay and bisexual men and expanding our experience of empathic contact.

Lest this suggestion seem simply a nice new-age sentiment, we need to acknowledge how much this requires us to face our fear and to embrace it rather than making an enemy of it or trying to conquer or exclude it. In this way fear can become part of the "bliss," to quote mythologist Joseph Campbell (1988, p. 94), that shows us where we need to travel next in our professional journey. It becomes a sign pointing, as it were, in the direction we need to move, carefully, a step at a time, as though we were walking a narrow mountain ridge, a slender bridge, the "razor's edge" of our growth. In this way, our work becomes a journey, and the battles we encounter, in the highest spirit of aikido, become a dance (Egendoff, 1986, p. 264).

In this chapter we have reviewed our thinking and experience in helping gay and bisexual men formulate a healthy identity. We understand this process to be a journey rather than a prize. It begins in a very dark and lonely wood. But we, as counselors and therapists, can become skillful guides, grounded in our own journey, helping brothers find their way home to a tribe that mirrors and affirms their hearts and a sense of responsibility that embraces both duty and ability to respond.

END

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Date Filmed

March 29, 1991